

Long-range planning prepared Southern Hills for the Open

Before Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa played host to the U.S. Open last month, course preparation plans dating back 5 years or more had to be effected.

"It may seem strange that a course widely recognized as one of the most beautiful in the world would need so much work," said Jim Lucius, executive vice president, chief operating officer, and director of golf at Southern Hills. "But Superintendent Sonny Faust and his staff of 25 have been working from dawn to dark to get ready."

Preparations for the Open, the seventh national championship tournament played on the course, naturally centered around combating the heat of Oklahoma summers, which can readily destroy a golf course. (The temperature in Tulsa was in the 90's the week before the Open, with more of the same expected for the week of play.)

The preparations actually began in 1972 with extensive

drainage work, followed in 1975 with the installation of a Toro automatic underground irrigation system. According to the gospel of Lucius, "Water management is the most important aspect of golf course maintenance."

With the automatic system, the entire course — greens, tees, fairways, and rough — can be watered in about 13 hours. With the old manual system, it took more than 3 days. Also, much more of the grounds is being watered than was possible with the old system: deep into the rough, the driving range, and along the long entrance road to the club.

"We were looking at some aerial photos of the club taken when the PGA was held here in 1970," Lucius recalled shortly before last month's tournament. "There were circles of green around the sprinklers, but everywhere else was brown. This year, everything in and around all the fairways, the roughs, and even the non-golf areas will be green."

Other Open preparation work included rebuilding 13 of the tees. This spring the course maintenance crew concentrated on vegetation. "We gave more attention to post-emergence and pre-emergence weed treatment and greatly expanded and accelerated our feeding and

LEFT: Lucius and Faust examine the Vari-Time 4000 central controller. BELOW: Faust in the new pump house.



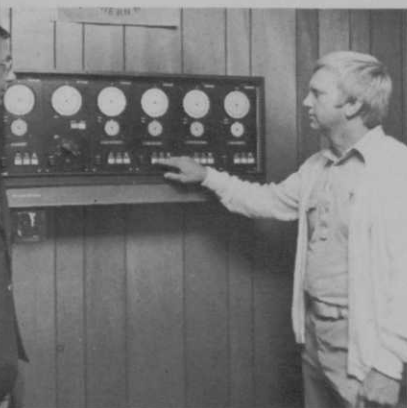
Director of Golf Jim Lucius and Superintendent Sonny Faust check one of the satellite controllers of the Southern Hills irrigation system.

seeding work," Lucius reported.

Equipment for the irrigation system was supplied by Wait Sales Co. of Tulsa. It included a Vari-Time 4000 programmer, 70 field satellites, 1,036 sprinkler heads, 105,000 feet of pipe, 208,000 feet of wire, and 70,000 feet of control

tubing. A new fully automatic pumping system also was installed.

Water for the Southern Hills course is drawn from wells into holding ponds and supplemented with municipal service. "The water we buy from the city is very expensive," Lucius noted.



LEFT: Lucius and Faust examine the Vari-Time 4000 central controller. BELOW: Faust in the new pump house.



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