Take it easy, take it easy,
Don't let the sound of your own wheels
drive you crazy.

You could say that *Take It Easy,*
the Eagles' hit song from the
mid-1970s, was superintendent
Don Sutton's theme song when
he grew in Kinsale Golf Club
last year and the year before.

Yes, we did say last year and the year
before. Sutton had that long to grow in Kinsale,
located in the booming suburbia on the northern
dge of Columbus, Ohio. Hence, there
wasn't the sound of Sutton's own bustling wheels
screeching in his head reminding him to hurry
up and get the course grown in so it could open,
and the new cash register could be broken in.

That's not to say the grow-in didn't come with
pressure. But it was sure nice to have a lot of time
to grow in the Arthur Hills design, Sutton says.

Now Sutton realizes that the golf business,
like many facets of American commerce, is driven
by the almighty dollar. It's expensive to build a golf course, so it's vital to open it quickly
to start making money.

The Kinsale project, however, goes against
the "time is money" motto. Sutton's philosophy
—with which it is difficult to contend—states
that taking one's time on a massive project, such
as building a golf course, also equates directly to
the issue of accruing legal tender.

Sutton seeded Kinsale in October 2002. A lot of courses seeded around that time of year
are expected to open the following spring. Kinsale targeted late May of this year to open. The
course's key decision makers, including Sutton,
thought it best to let the course ripen like a full-
grown tomato before opening.

In May, Sutton opened the course to area
superintendents to play in a qualifying round
for the BASF Professional Turf-sponsored Peo-
ple vs. The Pros event. One could tell Sutton
was proud to have his peers over to his house.
He was confident that they would be impressed,
too. Sutton said that day he was 99 percent
satisfied with the course's appearance.

The 35-year-old Sutton says the decision
makers didn't want to open Kinsale in a rush
and have players playing on thin turf and hitting
second shots from bad lies. They knew that
would be akin to someone buying a new car,
taking it out for a spin and discovering that the
air conditioning didn't work. (So much for
going back to that dealership.)

"Our goal was to open in perfect condition
and have people in awe of what we were offer-
ing," says Sutton, who has political science and
turf degrees from The Ohio State University.

Who can argue with that shoot-for-the-stars
thinking? In mid-May, the course's turf looked
healthy and mature. Yes, Kinsale looked like a
new golf course, with newly planted trees
and shimmering new cart paths, but the turf
looked like it had been there awhile.

Competition is tough in Kinsale's market,
and many of the rivals are fantastic golf courses.
The area has the reputation for having some of
the best maintained courses in the country,
Sutton points out. So it made sense that Kin-
sale's goal was for its turf to look like the other
golf courses' turf when it opened.

Kinsale's course and clubhouse cost $25 mil-
lion. Not many owners can sit on the opening
of a golf course with that kind of jack invested.
But Sutton says it was more important for the
course's business to make a solid first impres-
sion than to open early, earn some money and take
the chance on not making a good first impres-
sion because the turf was still in its infancy.

It was long-sighted thinking, and it sure
made sense. It took the pressure off Sutton, who
had the time to think twice about making deci-
sions related to the grow-in.

But it wasn't like Sutton didn't feel any
pressure. Remember, this is the golf course mainte-
nance business in 2004. "If you're given a year
and a half to do a grow-in, the course had better
be perfect when it opens," Sutton declares.

OK. So it wasn't that easy.

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Taking the Time
for a Grow-In

BY LARRY AYLWARD

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