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The sky was blue. The turf was green. The air was delightfully warm and the companionship wonderful. It was one of the saddest days I've ever spent on a golf course.

After 68 years the Canton (Conn.) Public GC has closed. Conceived, built, maintained and run by the Lowell family, the decision was made to sell the valuable piece of property in this upscale Hartford suburb to a developer that will turn most of the land into a mall called The Shoppes at Farmington Valley.

On this day, I played the nine-hole course with Heather Lowell Garvin, the third generation to be involved with Canton. She inherited the superintendent position from her father who stayed on as golf pro. We were not the only golfers that day. A few others were out as well — friends of the family and long-time men's club members who wanted one more round. The general public, though, had played its last.

Neighbors have already taken to turning the course into their own playground, stealing cups and vandalizing turf. Incredibly, as we stood in the middle of the fourth fairway waiting to hit our approach shots, a young boy rode his bicycle across the green while his mother stood nearby watching the entire proceedings. They appeared surprised when Garvin told them to leave, in a firm but polite voice.

We traversed the layout in no time even as we negotiated silt fences already in place for the coming destruction. There were cups in the greens and broken flagsticks (when visible) served as our targets. The good ones had been removed to thwart stealing.

The putting surfaces hadn't been mowed in a few days, but the undulations her great-grandfather and grandfather built into the greens in the early 1930s still made putting a delightful challenge even at slow speeds.

Garvin has played the course innumerable times, honing a game that was good enough at one time for her to qualify for the USGA Women's Public Links Championship. She is a low-handicap that hits straight and far and possesses a deft putting touch.

As we went along, I found the course more and more to my liking — the natural rolls in the fairway, the variety of the holes and the shots required to master them. I wondered why I had never driven the 45 minutes Continued on page 86.
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The Lowells have a history of giving to the game of golf and this was just the latest donation, sort of like an organ transplant.

Superintendent Kevin Bengston of Indian Hill CC in Newington used about 1,500 square feet of turf from the third and the eighth holes to resod his entire damaged putting green. Bengston was happy to get the grass, but not with the circumstances that made it possible. "I'm not a big fan of bulldozing golf courses to put up buildings," he says.

At Hunter GC in Meriden, superintendent Tom DeVaux and his crew built a nursery out of turf strips taken from two greens, something the golf course has wanted to do for years. Three of DeVaux's workers traveled to Canton and loaded up with nearly 1,500 square feet of good, healthy turf. Less than 24 hours later on a chilly morning, what was once a Canton green was now a Hunter nursery.

Making the deal even sweeter for Indian Hill and Hunter was the price — free.

The Lowells have a history of giving to the game of golf and this was just the latest donation, sort of like an organ transplant. The person may be dead, but in the process he has given life to someone else.

Garvin is delighted the two courses were willing hosts. She intends to keep an eye on how the transplants worked.

"My husband (Dana, Canton's assistant superintendent/mechanic) said, "We can go visit our grass,'" Garvin said smiling.

Too bad someone who cares so much about a golf course is losing one. Garvin is unsure what her next job will be. She is taking the summer off.

I feel fortunate to have had the chance to play Canton and even more so in the company of Garvin. The course is no more, but I have my memories and my Canton Public GC ballmark, logo ball and scorecard. The scorecard is blank. The day was not about numbers. It was truly about the game and the golf course and the company — just the way it should be.

But it was a sad, sad day."
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GREENS RENOVATION

Subtle Approach Ensures Subtle Changes

Architect Tripp Davis ‘massages’ greens to regain lost cupping areas

BY ANTHONY PIOPPI

Oklahoma-based golf course architect Tripp Davis was brought in by an upscale private course located in the metropolitan New York area to see what could be done to soften portions of two greens that had lost cupping areas because of increased green speeds. The club (which declined to allow its name to be used for this story) was looking for a way to regain those areas while foregoing entire greens renovations.

“Our approach is that you want to fly in under the radar screen and make changes in a way so subtle that you leave as little mark as you can,” Davis says.

The two greens Davis worked on average about 6,000 square feet. About 2,000 square feet was reconstructed on one green, and another 3,000 square feet was affected on the other green. The project began in early October 2002 and was done in seven days.

“The best time to do it is in the fall,” Davis says of the procedure, which he calls “massaging.” “You’re not going to want to play on the [reworked areas] again that year.”

The first step of the procedure is to strip the sod from the designated area. The sod is then placed nearby in a shaded area and kept moist throughout the proceedings. Davis said it is imperative to lay the sod flat, grass side up, instead of keeping it rolled.

The purpose of re-using the sod is so the renovated section blends in with the unchanged portion. The turf of the New York layout was a bentgrass-Poa annua mix. Sodding or seeding with just bentgrass would have made the affected area stand out, creating an irregular putting surface that would also require different maintenance practices. The soil from the section Davis worked on was taken out in two 4-inch lifts using a small backhoe. The material was saved in a protected area to keep it from becoming contaminated.

Davis said the first layer is predominantly topdressing, while the second 4-inch section is the original greens mix, which in many cases will be native topsoil.

After the soil is removed, an additional 6 feet of sod is stripped from around the perimeter of the area being “massaged,” allowing Davis to blend in the new contours.

With the New York project, drainage was added as well to the remodeled section. In these situations, Davis said he had to be careful to install drainage in such a way as not to pull water from the new putting surface faster than the rest of the green. Even though the original soil is re-used, it loses its compaction during removal and that causes its water-holding capacity to increase, meaning it no longer drains at the same rate.

At this job, 3-inch perforated drain lines were laid into an 8-inch trench. First, 2 inches of pea gravel was...
put down, then the pipe. More pea gravel was added until there was a 2-inch layer of rock covering the pipe. The remaining part of the trench was filled with a mix of sand (50 percent), soil (40 percent) and peat (10 percent).

In order to initially improve porosity, a 4-inch cone of the same 5-4-1 mix was added on top of the trench. "Pea gravel all the way would speed up drainage too much," Davis says.

Once completed, the original soil was replaced in two layers. Once that was complete, a light layer of nitrogen was spread to facilitate root growth, and the sod was put back.

The entire process took about three days per green. But even though the most intrusive work was completed in that short time, extra care was taken to ensure the turf was healthy. Davis said a microscopic gap between the soil and the sod is created when the sod is replaced. If the quality of the irrigation water is not good — a high percentage of salts, for instance — a layer will build up in the gap and hinder root growth or cause roots to move laterally. Also, too much nitrogen can cause the roots to grow at such a rapid rate that they will once again move laterally instead of down into the soil, thus creating a thatch layer.

Light and frequent applications of topdressing, often as twice a week, were performed when the sod was knitted in enough to handle some wear. Depending on the weather, the first aeration can occur later in the fall or in early spring, Davis says.

In a best-case scenario, the greens are playable in five to six months, depending on the weather. According to Davis, those wishing to take a chance performing the procedure in the spring could have the greens back in action in 60 days, but face the increased risk of losing turf.

So far Davis has massaged greens on three courses, including one of his own designs, Grand Elk Ranch and Club in Granby, Colo., that opened last fall. The technique was necessitated after a drain line collapsed. The problem was corrected before the course opened using the massaging method.

The majority of greens needing revamping, however, are on older courses and that fact points to a contradiction in what golfers will tolerate, Davis points out.

"There is a big difference between classic golf courses and new golf courses," he says. "If we built new greens with 3-percent slope that were rolling at 10, we'd get crucified. It would be a bad design. In the Northeast and other areas, they are pinning areas (on older courses) close to 5 percent with green speeds approaching 11."

If one day those clubs find the contours too severe, a massage may be just the cure.

Pioppi is a free-lance writer from Middletown, Conn.
**Goods for the Green**

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**Cassette system**

Turfline offers a greens maintenance cassette system for tripexes. The Thatch-Away SUPA-SYSTEM is a set of special greens maintenance units to fit all popular greens tripexes. A range of interchangeable turf maintenance cassettes can be fitted into the SUPA-SYSTEM units, enabling superintendents to perform a greater range of greens care operations with their tripexes. Eight cassettes make up the system: verticutter, scarifier, groomer, deep slicer, rotary brush, topdressing brush, greens spiker and star sifter. For more information, contact 800-443-8506 or CIRCLE NO. 200

**Water management system**

Evaporative Control Systems offers its patented water management system. The subsurface water system provides moisture levels, drainage and water harvesting in one simple unit. For more information, contact 877-608-2615 or CIRCLE NO. 201

**Verticutter**

The Turf Doctor from Allen Power Equipment and distributed by Seago International is a verticutter designed to clear out thatch and provide a healthy, playable surface in a short time. This unit should be used at an approximate depth of one-eighth inch for maximum coverage and effectiveness. For more information, contact 800-780-9899 or CIRCLE NO. 202

**Walking greens mowers**

Jacobsen Turf, Commercial and Specialty Equipment offers the new Jacobsen E-Walk all-electric walking greens mower. The mower has no oil, no hydraulic fluids and no emissions. It's also virtually noiseless, the company says, so greens can be cut in early mornings without disturbing golf course neighbors.

Independent, weather-sealed, 48-V brushless DC electric motors drive the unit. One controls ground speed while the other allows the operator to adjust clip frequency independent of the mower's ground speed.

Jacobsen also introduces the Tournament Cut-22, first in a family of floating-head walking greens mowers. The mowers feature greens-hugging, floating head reels. Suspended from the chassis, the floating reel of the Tournament Cut mower moves horizontally, vertically and from side-to-side to eliminate scalping severely undulating greens. For more information, contact 704-504-6600, www.jacobsen.com or CIRCLE NO. 203

**Roller**

Smithco offers its Tournament X-Press Greensroller, which features tilt steering with one-hand turning, powder-coating 9-inch rollers, heavy-duty cast roller bearings and 10-foot inside wheel-turning radius. For more information, contact 877-833-7648 or CIRCLE NO. 209

**Hole cutter guide**

Standard Golf's new Hole Cutter Guide helps remove the worries in making a consistent perfect cut. To ensure a perfect cut, users simply stand on the Hole Cutter Guide — a strong aluminum platform — and drive the hole cutter through an opening that matches the size of the cutter shell. The lightweight platform prevents the users' feet from twisting and damaging the surface. For more information, contact 319-266-2648, www.standardgolf.com or CIRCLE NO. 206

**Foliar nutrition**

Millikan Turf Products says its Emerald Isle CPR-True Foliar Nutrition Program is successful in defending against basal rot anthracnose. The CPR-True Foliar Nutrition Program was tested in independent trials at The Pennsylvania University Valentine Research Center last summer.

The CPR-True Foliar Nutrition Program provides small, efficient amounts of foliar-absorbed, complete nutrition along with a generous amount of high-quality seaplant extract. For more information, contact 800-845-8502 or CIRCLE NO. 208

**Control grain**

The Greenskeeper from Broyhill controls grain on greens. With height and speed adjustable rotating brushes that have soft, but firm bristles, the Greenskeeper controls the grain of grass without bruising or scuffing.

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