

Preparing for the Champions Tour

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During the first week of August, TPC Twin Cities plays host to the 3M Championship, an annual Champions Tour event in Blaine, Minnesota. Originally, the Coldwell Banker-Burnet Senior Classic, the tournament debuted in 1993 at Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids, Minnesota and found its current home at TPC Twin Cities in 2001. This tournament has generated more than 11.5 million dollars for local charities such as Allina's Abbott Northwestern and United Hospitals. Proceeds from the 3M Championship have benefited the Virginia Piper Cancer Institute on the Abbott Northwestern campus and the United Family Health Center's effort to build a new facility. This makes the 3M Championship one of the largest donors on Tour and the largest sports-related charity in Minnesota. Even though the Champions Tour comes to town for only a short time, its benefits can be felt for the entire year.

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TPC Network Overview

TPC Twin Cities is part of a greater network of golf courses called the TPC Network. The TPC Network is comprised of 24 different clubs across the country including public, private, and resort clubs with additional clubs being constructed within the United States and around the world. This is an ever-expanding network of facilities, each unique in character, yet consistent in quality. These courses serve as tournament sites for the PGA Tour and Champions Tour and are complemented by excellent practice facilities for TOUR players, members and their guests. Along with these high maintenance standards, a number of TPC clubs meet rigorous environmental standards, helping to preserve and protect wildlife habitats on the golf course, as a result earning certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

TPC Twin Cities Overview

TPC Twin Cities was built on 235 acres of a 543 acre housing development site. It has 4 acres of bentgrass L-93 greens, 40 acres of bentgrass Southshore tees and fairways, 40 acres of bluegrass-fescue rough, and 100 acres of native grass areas. The site has 27 bodies of water comprising of 60 acres of water of which 14 acres are protected wetlands. The site was built on a former sod farm and over 500 million cubic yards of soil was moved during construction. All the peat soils were removed and used as material for spectator mounds. The golf course itself is a sand base which was mined on site and used to form all features. It provides unique challenges in nutrient holding capacity and especially water management. TPC Twin Cities opened as a private member club in June of 2000. The par 72, 7,164 yard, 18-hole championship course was designed by Arnold Palmer along with Minnesota native and PGA TOUR player consultant Tom Lehman.

Cultural Practices

Timing of the 3M Championship dictates all cultural practices implemented by the golf course maintenance staff. Starting in June, greens are lightly topdressed on a bi-weekly schedule, which starts with light topdressing using a Turfco Widespin 1530 attachment on a John Deere 2030 Prognator and is followed by aggressive verticutting. The greens are then brushed with a Greensgroomer brush and followed by a Buffalo blower to remove any excess debris. Finally, the pin location is moved and the green is watered. The topdressings are followed by occasional rolling throughout the month of July.

Chemical Applications

Timing of chemical and fertilizer applications is critical to ensure the success of the tournament. From the first fertilizer application in April, to the PGR application applied a week

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before the tournament, everything needs to come together for the last week in July. Foliar applications of Griggs Brothers products are used to fertilize the greens at a rate of .07 lbs/M, during the first and third weeks of July and then again at the end of July. Primo Maxx is applied along with the fertilizer at a rate of 0.137 oz/M. To help maximize moisture efficiency within the root zone, wetting agents are applied throughout the summer and finally during the second week of July. Fairways and tee complexes in June are fertilized at .5 lbs/M and then again in July at a rate of .61 lbs/M. During this time, a plant growth regulator is applied. One week prior to the tournament, fairways and tee complexes are sprayed with Trimmit at a rate of 6 oz/M. Two weeks prior to the beginning of the tournament, the primary rough is fertilized.

TPC Twin Cities has an ongoing integrated pest management program where broadleaf weeds are controlled using a selective herbicide such as Momentum

Fx[®]. In order to help protect the environment by limiting the use of herbicides, GCM staff spends considerable time hand picking weeds and hand spraying broadleaf weeds in no-mow native prairie areas of the course. Furthermore, a granular form of Dicamba, labeled K-O-G, is used to control broadleaf weeds in the bentgrass areas such as fairways and tees. This product is used to spot treat any annual weeds that may appear in the bentgrass. Individuals assigned with course set-up are asked to keep their eyes open when moving tee markers, moving bunker rakes, etc and to lightly apply K-O-G where weeds are spotted. GCM staff also carries around Triamine Jet-Spray Spot Weed Killer for weeds in long grass. Although this approach to control of broadleaf weeds in bentgrass areas can be time consuming, it cuts chemical costs and limits harmful toxins from leaching into the water, when compared to broadcasting or spraying entire tees and fairways. Poa annua is aggressively plugged out of all bentgrass areas on the golf course.

Preparation

In conjunction with the normal mow-

ing schedule, many other tasks have to be completed during the month of July, including getting the bunkers in superior shape. This involves edging the bunkers, mowing inner slopes, checking sand depth, and if needed, adding bunker sand and compacting it. Bunker depths need to be consistent in all bunkers with all slopes at two inches and bunker bases at four inches. With 74 bunkers to maintain, this usually takes a crew of eight about one week to complete.

Along with edging bunkers, there are many other small tasks, which require attention. For instance, approximately 1,500 irrigation heads and countless valves and drains are edged and six miles of continuous cart paths are edged. A crew also spends time removing unwanted willows from pond edges and isolated areas. At the request of the Rules Officials, hazard lines are mowed on a regular basis throughout the summer. The Rules Officials also request that the hazard lines be completely faded out by the time they show up in late July. When the Rules

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Officials arrive, they complete all course markings. Another task is to fill all of the ball marks and divots with a green sand/seed mixture. Ball marks are smoothed out and blended in with a Partac sand mixture applied with a squeeze bottle. Finally, a few days prior to the beginning of the tournament, the Equipment Manager grinds all reels and bedknives and sharpens rotary blades to make sure they are cutting to their optimal performance.

With the heavy equipment setting up grandstands and tents, numerous areas need to have irrigation heads and lines marked and painted to avoid irrigation breaks. Bike flags are used to identify irrigation heads and valves, which are more visible to operators than small irrigation flags. Starting on the last Monday in June, crews building structures need to be monitored daily to prevent unnecessary damage.

Advance Week

The weekend before the 3M Championship begins, the golf course maintenance staff performs a dry run, or a dress rehearsal, of how the tournament week will run. Each member of the staff will perform his or her morning and afternoon tasks and any minor problems will be corrected. Along with the dry run, any small final touches will be taken care of and the rough will be mowed for the final time.

Tournament Week

When the tournament week finally arrives, the GCM staff usually feels some

relief because the hard work of preparing for the tournament is complete. Unless a heavy rain event or something out of the ordinary occurs, GCM staff can complete their daily tasks and relax and enjoy the tournament.

Monday through Thursday of tournament week consists of pro-am's, junior events, skills competitions, and practice rounds. Friday through Sunday the Champions Tour players compete to become the next 3M Champion. To prepare the golf course for each day's event, GCM staff mows greens and collars, rakes bunkers, drags dew from tee complexes, fairways, and approaches, and cuts flag placements according to the Rules Officials locations. Hand watering will be implemented if needed. GCM staff begins the morning at 5:00 am and the golf course is ready for play at approximately 9:00 am. The staff then eats breakfast and is dismissed. Staff has the option of going home, watching golf, or relaxing in the maintenance hospitality tent. At 3:00 pm, the staff reconvenes for dinner before starting back-up around 4:00 pm. To prepare the golf course for the next day's event, GCM staff mows tees, approaches, and fairways, roll greens, fill divots, repair ball marks, smooth bunkers, and hand water if needed. Staff finishes around 10:00 pm. If Mother Nature cooperates, staff is able to go home after Sunday morning's set-up and enjoy Monday off to get a much deserved rest.

The Monday following the tournament



holds one last sponsored pro-am in which volunteers and sponsors get a chance to play the golf course. Even though the golf course is not mowed and players play Sunday's pin locations, a few GCM staff members come in to put out tee markers and flags. Also, tear down of the grandstands and tents begin meaning certain irrigation heads and lines have to be remarked to avoid damage by heavy equipment.

Post Tournament

After the 3M Championship concludes, it feels like summer is over and winter is upon us. However this is not the case. During the next few weeks leading up to Labor Day, damage from tournament becomes more evident. The most obvious sign from the tournament is the damage caused from grandstands and tents. The turf under these structures do not see any sunlight or moisture for nearly seven weeks. These areas need to be heavily slit-seeded and fertilized with some areas needing to be completely rototilled. Along with the loss of turf, many small areas are dug out to create level ground for scaffolding. These holes need to be filled in before reseeding can occur.

In addition to the loss of turf, many areas around the golf course are severely compacted from heavy equipment and spectator traffic. These areas are aerified with a Toro pull-behind aerifier attached to a John Deere 2030 ProGator. Along with seeding, numerous cart path edges are resodded due to the loss of turf caused by wide, heavy equipment. Approximately 10 to 15 pallets of sod are needed to repair cart path edges throughout the golf course. Weather permitting, tournament damage areas start to recover by mid to late September.

Even though the 3M championship last one week, planning, preparation, and clean-up is a season long event.



The grounds staff at TPC Twin Cities