

Preparing for the LPGA

by Betty Ford

Thursday before the LPGA at Bethesda CC. The course is swarming with green June beetles but Dean Graves is pays no attention; he's concerned with other swarms: concessionaires erecting bleachers, workers installing one Mazda in the middle of the lake, two on special stands in front of the clubhouse and another on the tee beside the entrance gate, NBC people who will begin stringing cable and erecting TV towers, others of his crew who are weeding and mulching flowerbeds and repairing divots, and suppliers who are checking with him on last-minute needs.

"The concession people are the biggest pain," says Dean. "They come out, try to get their job done in a hurry and don't care what they do, don't care if its rainy and the course is soaked, they are only going to be here for a week then leave. The TV people try to take over and run cables wherever they want. They simply don't care!"

In spite of the fact that Dean increases his normal summer staff of 13 by 25 percent two weeks before the tournament and 200 percent the week of the tournament, they are still too busy to

watch everyone. On Wednesday, however, an employee did witness someone *drive across a green*. Dean reported it and the culprit was fired on the spot.

The activity mimics those darting Junebugs. An area behind the club house is occupied by 13 giant trailers. It's reminiscent of behind-the-scenes at the circus. Poles and boards for bleachers are laid out in orderly fashion ready for assembly, employees in carts dodge golfers' carts, a parade of UPS trucks bring giant cartons to the Pro Shop.

Newly planted flower beds with white gravel spelling MAZDA look fresh. They were obviously planted at just the right moment. "We have a full-time horticulturist in charge of all the floral arrangements, but now he has three extra people helping him. We don't want to put the plantings in too early because of the maintenance, but we can't wait too late because they must get used to the area."

Dean starts work for the LPGA about a year in advance, with planning meetings and fairway preparations. The activity

reaches its peak the week prior to the tournament. The number of details is astronomical. Dean and his crew work, literally, from dawn to dark. He eats lunch

while talking on two walkie-talkies. And when the last members tee off at 1 p.m. on Sunday, "We'll be following them around cleaning up after them."

Once the tournament starts on Monday morning with the Celebrity/Pro-Am, "we go on auto-



matic, says Dean. We work from 5 a.m. to about nine when golf starts. Then we can quit until the last golfer is finished and work until dark."

In spite of the unimaginable extra work, and having 80,000 spectators and 1200 volunteers tromp the course, Dean loves having the tournament. "It's really rewarding to see your course on national television. The staff really gets excited. It's not like preparing for anything else—member-guest and club championships are normal for any club. This is 20 steps above that. The best women players in the world are here, it's quite an honor." There are other benefits as well: Children's Hospital and other charities receive substantial donations.

Dean has enough staff to take care of everything except his worst nightmare—a big storm leaving the bunkers full of water. As a contingency he asks near-by superintendent friends to have standby help ready to pump and rake sand. "My friends are so great, all I have to do is pick up the phone; they'll send me as many people as I need."

Despite it all, declares Dean, "I'd be disappointed if they should decide not to have it here in '92."

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