

THRU THE GREEN

March, 2000

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California



Stanford's Williams Is Truly Home On the Farm

By Bob Costa, CGCS

Any mention of Stanford Athletics quickly brings to mind the recent and past success of the football, baseball and basketball programs, each producing its share of prominent male and female athletes. Included amongst its rich sports traditions are the unheralded accomplishments of Tiger Woods who made Stanford Golf Course his home from 1994 thru 1996.

In 1995, halfway between Tiger's freshman and sophomore years at Stanford and making a much less auspicious debut in the athletic program was San Diego native and current golf course superintendent Ken Williams, CGCS. Williams, now in his 5th year at Stanford, is remarkably only the fourth superintendent since the George Thomas/Billy Bell Sr. design opened in 1930. "I've followed some great people and I'm honored to have this opportunity," remarked the easy going Williams when asked about the amazing longevity of the course's superintendents.

Overseeing a course rich in tradition, and one of the peninsula's finest, Williams timed his arrival on the "farm" perfectly. In 1994, golf architect John Harbottle was putting the finishing touches on an 18-hole green and bunker restoration project. Under Williams' capable leadership, he quickly established a goal of minimizing the Poa annua invasion of the Dominant bentgrass greens and implemented a program, which includes no time

aerification or verticutting and a minimal use of fungicides. Asked about the success of the program, Williams' hedges for a moment. "Without hand picking, I don't think you can ever completely prevent Poa invasion." "Our course is 70 years old and Poa is predominate throughout the golf course." "We have a much tougher battle slowing the Poa than the new courses. " "In the spring, the Poa population in the greens increases to about 25%, by summer it's less than 10%." Not bad for a course that played 72,000 18-hole rounds last year.

In spite of the heavy traffic, Williams, his assistant Ruben Silveira and his staff of 12 full time employees regularly maintain the course to highly competitive standards. With a golf program of Stanford's caliber, producing recent all American's Woods and Joel Kribel, this is not a task to be taken lightly. Williams' success at Stanford can be credited in part to his management style, which includes grabbing a shovel when necessary. "Over the years I've learned in order to be successful it's important to hire good people, delegate and hold them accountable," Williams says. In addition, Williams aspires to a theory that the learning process never ends. He is considering adding more courses to his degree from Cal Poly Pomona by taking a few courses at Stanford. Says Williams, "In golf course management, I think it is impor-

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NorCalendar

March 6

Stanford GC - Etonic Seminar
"Enhancing Your Job
& Securing Your Future"

March 23

USGA/NCGA at Castlewood CC

April 10

Media Forum

May 1, 2

CGSA State Meeting - San Diego

May 22

Superintendent's Field Workshop
Ruby Hill Golf Club

June 26

Superintendent - Pro Tournament
Green Hills CC

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