

# 2004 Golf Course Construction Field Day Held at San Francisco's Renowned Harding Park

Golf course management professionals from Northern California and throughout the state gathered on Monday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at San Francisco's Harding Park Golf Course for an in depth examination of the recently renovated property. Harding Park is but one of the jewels in the crown of the "City by the Bay's" covey of six golf properties.

Sponsored by the University of California Extension Service and the Northern California Golf Superintendents Association, the Field Day began with an early morning tour of the famous site located on the micro isthmus that juts across Lake Merced. Attendees were able to view course attributes first hand including design, irrigation, greens, plant management and nuances of the new maintenance facility currently under construction.

While its neighbors of equally recognized distinction, though exclusively private clubs, that surround San Francisco's natural lake have aged like fine wines, Harding's luster became somewhat tarnished over the years. With the efforts of many and the determination of one person particularly, the gleam has returned as bright as ever.

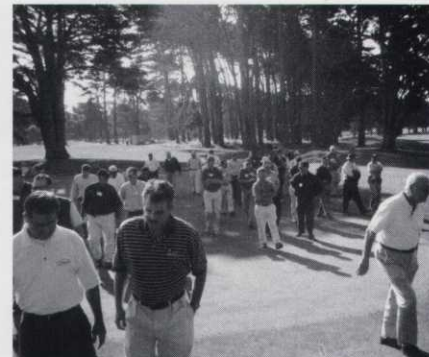
Frank "Sandy" Tatum has been that singularly determined force behind the project. An accomplished amateur player, 1942 NCAA national champion from Stanford and a past USGA president, Tatum served as the keynote speaker for the conference portion of the workshop. He provided the attendees with his usually insightful wisdom on the Game of Golf while giving an intimate recollection of the harrowing trials of finding the necessary funding and approvals for the 16 million dollar renovation project.

Tatum confessed that his driving

motivation was to give back to the Game and to restore Harding Park to such a degree "...that the ordinary golfer could have an affordable opportunity to play a course of National Championship caliber." His parting comments particularly delighted the many superintendents present when, in response to an audience question, he professorially noted that, "Greenkeeping is the fundamental foundation of golf." He had earlier indicated that one of the pressures that the game's superintendents face today is to, "Resist the constant effort to increase the speed of greens." No doubt he was preaching to the choir with his audience.

Following Tatum the key experts involved in Harding's renovation provided presentations including: Leslie Claytor, PGA Tour Project Manager; Neil Oettinger, Landscapes Unlimited Construction Superintendent; Dan Briesach, City of San Francisco Golf Course Superintendent; Sean Sweeney, City of San Francisco Director of Golf; Patrick Gross, USGA Green Section Southwestern Director; and Dan McKenna, City of San Francisco Superintendent of Recreation and Parks.

Les Claytor provided a solid overview on a variety of topics including a glimpse of the "original" Harding, clearing, demolition, shaping, course construction, finish and grassing, grow-in, and lastly the ultimate finished product. Claytor emphasized many of the PGA Tour



design team goals and noted, "One of our key goals was to establish Harding's 18<sup>th</sup> hole as one of the greatest finishing holes in golf.

Neil Oettinger with Landscapes Unlimited (*Kubly Construction*) addressed working with the design team, the importance of the liaison relationship with the client, the challenges of retrofitting drainage and working with a "grow-in" team concurrently with the permanent staff.

The panel of Dan Briesach, Sean Sweeney and Pat Gross reviewed the agronomic challenges and maintenance issues encountered during the construction.

Park Superintendent Dan McKenna summarized the current status of Harding Park, detailed the business operations of Harding and reviewed Harding's future directions including the soon to be announced planned national championship events.

GCSANC members Dan Briesach and Sean Sweeney hosted the event that was directed by University of California Cooperative Extension Environmental Horticulture Advisor Ali Harivandi, Ph.D.