



From the Editor

By **BRIAN NETTZ, CGCS**

Bunker Rehabilitation at the Presidio

The topic of bunkers is one of the most frequent issues a superintendent will face. I won't get into the philosophical debate of hazards and how the game of golf has been dumbed down to the lowest common denominator of golfer; where there is no such thing as a bad lie on any surface. I'll save that for the post GIS-seminar round table discussion at the nearest brew house. The days of actually knowing how to hit out of the standing water in a hazard are gone. I get it. The customer wants what they want. I'm going to give it to him even if I don't agree with it.

Case in point: the bunkers at Presidio. The bunkers several years ago (and some here currently) are like many we all enjoy; contaminated with soil, hard, failing drainage, blah, blah, blah. But rather than just re-do what we had I wanted to do something different. I wanted to give a more rustic, rugged look to the bunkers and get away from the curvilinear forms that every golfer has hit out of on every course their whole life. I approached an architect in the very beginnings of the bunker rehab planning and we guised the project in the form of a master plan scenario. Unfortunately, or fortunately, the plans received no traction. I was disappointed but I think it worked out best in the end. A tee renovation project was commenced and the bunker project shelved. I moved on but in the back of my mind I continued to search for the new Presidio look.

Move forward a couple of years, and a buddy of mine now calls himself a course designer. He forwards me some photos of a course he worked on in British Columbia. Upon looking at the photos I thought, "There was something we don't see every day!" A very rugged, natural look. It looked like a golf course was routed through the natural surroundings; not some surrounding natural features

encapsulated into a golf course. This was very close to what would work here. By now the tee project was ramping down, customer complaints about the bunkers were fever-pitch and money was now suddenly available to devote to the rehab of our biggest complaint. Additionally, we were trying to re-capture the look and feel of an old style course and our work mirrored closely the rehabilitation work done elsewhere on Presidio. We had an unexpectedly smooth historic compliance review.

Rather than blab on about the construction, the details, the process and the frustrations, I'll merely leave room for the photos and some tips for those thinking about embarking upon this voyage:

1. Use high quality drainage materials: double wall drainage pipe. Resist the temptation to buy that cheap Home Depot crap and be a budget hero. Do it once and do it right. We prefer Turf Drain of America tiling, no pea gravel and lining the trenches for a complete seal.
2. Get a moisture release curve on your bunker sand to determine depth. Can't stress this enough. Our final depth is 10". Yes, 10".
3. Fold the sod over itself (roots to roots) on the edge about a hand's length and staple. It will minimize soil entrance during grow-in.
4. You can't overdo the amount of drain tiling inside the bunker. Get as high up the slop as you possibly can.
5. Don't skimp on sand. Buy what you can afford and remember that the whiter your sand looks the more successful the project will be perceived, all other things being equal.
6. You can't overdo the amount of drain tiling inside the bunker. Get as high up the slop as you possibly can.



Before (left and below): Bunkers are typical and nondescript—what I wanted to get away from.





During (above and right): We created bunkers that followed the land's natural contours. GCSANC member Kaminski Golf handled rough shaping.



After (below): The bunkers have a more rustic, rugged look.

