



Perfect grooming: equipment from Ransomes on the 13th at Augusta National

Carl's master class

Carl Horrax, pictured right, is a graduate of Myerscough College and worked on a placement at Pinehurst No 2 before being recommended to Marsh Spencer, Superintendent at the Augusta National. Carl, 21, has worked at the famous Georgia club since February and will return home with tales of a high tech paradise for the greenkeepers charged with maintaining the most pampered course in the world. These are his impressions.

The first two things about the Augusta National which stood out in my mind when I arrived were how immaculately lush and green everything looked and how the television cameras don't do the course justice. Television cameras make the course look rather flat but in fact the contouring is impressive – particularly from the steep drop off the 10th tee to the relatively flat 13th fairway.

Then once I had got over the initial shock and saw the greens for the first time I quickly discovered why they are the most terrifying in the world. The undulations on the greens are incredible and it can only be described as classic Alistair McKenzie work. This combined



with the firmness and the close mowing makes even the best golfers in the world cringe at the thought of putting on them.

The Augusta National has a crew of 41 people for the 18 hole "Masters" course and the 9 hole par-3 course – venue for the annual pre-Masters par-3 tournament – this includes the management and the four qualified mechanics. The Golf Course Crew is solely responsible

for the course and doesn't look after the large area around the clubhouse, the trees and shrubs or the cabins located around the course. All these areas are taken care of by a separate Nursery Crew of another 16 people.

A great many of the Golf Course Crew are extremely well qualified. There are eight who already have two year degrees in some form of turf management and there are two others

'Within the workshop is a separate grinding room... There is also a separate welding room... and finally there is a spare parts room which puts your local Ford dealer to shame. Honestly, this place is amazing...'

who are presently studying for degrees on a part time basis. Then there are the six students who work on the course for a year and who are the best students from the top American turf universities.

The maintenance facilities at the Augusta National for an 18 hole course must be the best in the world. You really have to see it to believe it. The reception area more resembles a hotel lobby than the entrance to a golf course maintenance facility. In the Superintendent and First Senior Assistant's office you could easily picture Richard Branson sitting behind the desk and not a golf course superintendent. It really puts it into perspective that our industry has finally been given professional recognition by the golfing industry.

The crew room has everything that you could possibly require from microwaves, fridges, snack and drinks machines to the latest magazines and journals to read. Next door to the crew room is another crew room filled with rows of desks and resembling a class room. In fact this is used for weekly crew meetings and is especially busy during the week of the Masters. Another impressive thing about Augusta is that it has a Soil Lab. As a result of this I've learnt that diagnosis of diseases by visual appearance isn't the most effective method because disease appearance isn't always like that in a text book. So by taking samples of the diseased grass plants and looking at them under the microscope you can diagnose the disease by the spores and pathogens present. This is a cost effective method of disease control on most courses but especially Augusta National as it keeps the fungicide use down because you're spot treating the diseased and area and because you are identifying the disease before it gets established.

As you can imagine a golf course like the Augusta National will not be short of machinery. For transportation around the course everyone is assigned his own vehicle, either an EZ-GO, Toro Workman or a Cushman. It seems like a perfect world and in many ways it is. But at first I thought that it was a total waste of money because probably eight vehicles never get used as the people assigned to them spent almost all their time operating machinery. Then I found out that a lot of the machinery, especially transportation equipment, is leased and gets replaced every two years and so it is just as expensive to get everyone a vehicle. Perhaps one or two of the larger courses in the UK would benefit from this method of obtaining vehicles.

When it comes to general equipment it is a case of they've got it and if they don't have it they don't need it.

The two pieces of equipment that I expected to see but that they don't have is a verti-drain and a core master. A verti-drain is something they would love to use on the fairways but because under the surface there is a



At ease: Greenstaff relax in spacious surroundings of a "crew room"

mass of cables, pipes and wires some of which are very shallow the risk is too high. Both of these pieces of equipment are used for green aeration but the aeration service is contracted out.

As you can imagine a course with so much machinery requires a huge mechanical workshop and, as you would expect, that is what they have. The workshop is very well organised and has everything from huge hydraulic ramps that comfortably carry a Ransomes 300 to small hydraulic tables for the pedestrian mowers. Within the workshop is separate grinding room equipment with four reel

grinders and eight portable backlappers. There is also a separate welding room with both gas and mig welding facilities. And finally there is a spare parts room which puts your local Ford dealer to shame. Honestly, this place is amazing.

The Augusta National is irrigated wall-to-wall. There are 2100 Toro 650 or 670 heads on the main course and a further 550 on the par 3 course. It is run from a Toro Personal Computer in the irrigation room and from this computer you can do everything. There are 68 satellites around the course and from there you fingertip control of the irrigation. The Augusta National has three pump stations while the average course is the UK has one at most. Water is extracted from the two ponds on the par 3 course to irrigate the par 3 course. The main course is irrigated with purified canal water or straight from the mains water supply and in most cases it is the mains water which is used. The third pump station is located down by Rae's Creek and it is there for emergency purposes when if need by water can be taken from the Creek.

The irrigation room doubles up with the weather centre. In the room are four different lightning detectors, including one which is a PC which can track the lightning. There is also a separate personal computer which receives new weather images every 15 minutes so you can identify quickly whether or not a storm is building around you and you know when to get the golfers off the course and when to get the Golf Course Crew off the course. Lightning is very dangerous and the Augusta National takes no chances.

**MAIN MACHINERY
at The Augusta National
(golf course crew only)**

	Number
Jacobsen Pedestrian -	
Greens, tees, perimeters etc.....	35
Toro 500 GM - Greens.....	10
Ransomes 300 - Fairway.....	7
Ransomes 250 - Rough.....	2
Ransomes 180 - Fairway.....	8
Toro 450 - Rough.....	2
EZ-GO - Transport.....	19
Toro Workman - Transport.....	4
Cushman - with most attachments.....	21
John Deere 2300 Tractors.....	4
Large Toro Vacs.....	3
Smithco Sprayers.....	3
Toro Sprayer.....	1
John Deere Backhoe.....	1
Bob Cat.....	1
Ditch Witch.....	1