

Slowing down for the 'fall'

OCTOBER

BY BOB MAIBUSCH, CGCS, MGC

Hinsdale Golf Club is one of the older Golf Clubs (c1898) in the Midwestern United States., although that seems relatively new compared to many of the clubs in the UK. The current Golf Course (the club's third location) was designed by Donald Ross in the early 1900s. It is heavily wooded with over 100 species of trees and is on rolling terrain.

Being located near Chicago in the northern United States, October is typically a time that the course is beginning to slow down. Although it is in my estimation, the best time of year to play because of cooler temperatures and the beauty of the changing colours in foliage, we generally see a slow down of play. This affords the grounds staff the opportunity to perform improvement projects without inconveniencing a majority of the club's membership. Our fall (autumn) improvement projects are scheduled to be completed before winter sets in, but adverse weather conditions often

mean we complete these projects through the snow, frost and ice of winter so that they will be ready for the onset of spring.

The bulk of improvement projects at Hinsdale Golf Club are completed by our in house grounds staff. I am extremely fortunate to have a dedicated group of veteran staff members. Their experience allows us to perform these improvement projects in-house at a considerably lower cost then contracting out the work. Typically, we work along with a golf course architect and our membership committees to finalise improvement plans. At that point, if a considerable amount of earth moving is required we will bring in a shaper to rough out the work. Our staff will commence grading, drainage, sodding, irrigation or whatever else is necessary to com-

plete the project. In the last three seasons we have completed renovation of all the clubs 53 greenside bunkers and sodding of all green surrounds, a number of new tees and tee renovation construction, dredging of an existing three acre lake including removing approximately 25,000 cubic yards of material and setting in place by hand approximately 1.5 million pounds of boulders along the pond edge, new green construction, renovation of formal and informal landscape gardens, cart path construction assistance in a U.S \$2.5 million clubhouse renovation, oversee construction of a 4,000 square foot golf cart storage facility, construction of a new irrigation pump house, and oversight assistance in the planning of the facilities parking lots, and numerous other smaller projects.

This fall (1996) we are overseeing the installation of a new golf course irrigation system. This work, being performed by an outside contractor, will result in a radio controlled Rainbird system. We investigated the possibility of using triple row irrigation on the fairways but it was determined that the proximity of the trees on this wooded golf course would not allow it. We had resigned ourselves to a typical double row irrigation system with some trepidation on my part because of the membership's desire to have greens rough during the hot, dry Chicago summers and my intent to keep the bent grass fairways dry and firm. Our solution is to install perimeter watering on all of the fairways. In addition to the double row of part circle (180 degrees) irrigation heads which will only irrigate the blue grass roughs. It is believed that we are the first golf club in the US to install this type of system.

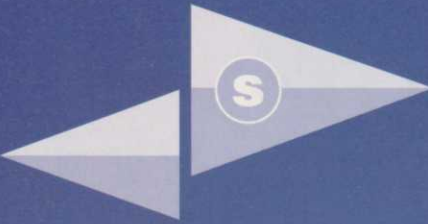
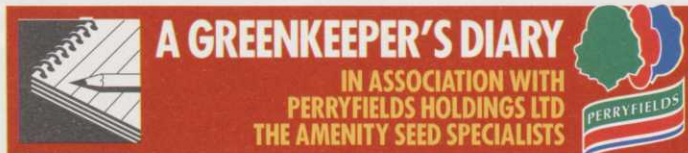
In addition to the irrigation system, the grounds staff will be constructing six new tees and beginning renovation of the golf courses 32 fairway bunkers. This will likely keep us busy until the snow covers the ground.

While these aggressive improvement schedules put significant stress on the staff and myself, particularly when we are expected to

complete with them with no diminished quality to the rest of the golf course, there is no great degree of satisfaction in seeing them completed. We all take great pride in the work that we do and the obvious enjoyment of the majority of the membership.

One of the key elements in gaining approval for projects and allaying members fears concerning their effect on playability is to maintain a high degree of communication. I accomplish this by attending all of the clubs Board of Directors and related committee meetings as an active participant. Additionally, I write a monthly article for our club's membership newsletter, post daily or weekly updates in the club house locker rooms, make myself available at least a portion of each day at the first tee, and eat my noon meal in the member's dining area so that I am available to answer questions, respond to criticisms or accept congratulations. This goes along way in satisfying members' curiosities and concerns about what we are doing to their golf facility, and gives me a significant advantage in attempting to anticipate their future wants and needs.

Another method that I have found invaluable in performing improvement projects in the most efficient and successful manner as possible to utilise the expertise of my fellow management professionals. By remaining active in local, national and international golf course management associations I have been fortunate enough to develop a network of outstanding individuals. Virtually every golf course improvement project that we might consider has been performed at some time by another club. Before we embark on a project that we have limited experience in I will contact that individual who has some experience in the procedure to ascertain the pitfalls and shortcuts that they encountered during their improvement process. This goes a long way to minimising the frustrations inherent when venturing into new territory, and ultimately saves my employer money by increasing our efficiency in seeing it through to a successful completion.



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