

The unseasonably hot and dry spring weather has taken golf clubs across the UK by surprise in recent weeks, putting many an ageing and/or failing irrigation system to the test as a result.

If you're one of the clubs that have limped through the last couple of summers with an inadequate system, it's time to stop burying your head in the sand-bunker: either invest in a proper retrofit and remedial work, or budget for an all-new system.

Both are daunting steps in these economically difficult times, but are far better than having your existing system kick the bucket in the height of summer!

Let's look at your options...

Retrofit and remedial work

Did you know that remedial work can improve an existing system's

efficiency by around 20%? By repairing or renovating, customers can make significant savings on ongoing operating costs as well as save on the expense of a new installation – something that makes perfect financial sense in these tough times.

If the wholesale replacement of your existing system just isn't feasible, then it is possible to phase in a new system over time – though you will, of course, be limited by the pipe network you've already got.

For example: you could replace your mains and cabling in the first year; replace your pump system and tank the second year; and then, depending on your budget, put in a greens, tees and fairways system in the third year.

By carrying out the first two phases, you are free to 'bolt-on' greens, tees and fairways cover as and when you can, which offers a more cost-effective solution.

Sprinkler nozzles are also subject to wear, so something as simple as adequate maintenance and periodic replacement can bring about a dramatic improvement in the overall efficiency of your system.

Because they need to be replaced every few years, manufacturers are constantly updating and improving their design and function, which means new nozzles will work at the very best flow and pressure whereas older nozzles will always become less uniform with age.

Remarkably, simply by renewing sprinkler nozzles, you can increase the efficiency of your system by up to 10% at the right pressure and flow.

With nozzles costing on average just £15 per head, this can be a highly cost-effective way of improving your system and is a job that can be carried out by the green-keeping team.



Invest in an all-new system

Effective irrigation is crucial to successful course maintenance, and hence the majority of clubs have a contingency for this or are saving for a new system.

But many clubs persevere with serious problems, calling out the service engineers time and again, accruing unnecessary labour costs as well as causing turf damage during hot, dry spells, until it becomes a real headache.

Before you reach breaking point, it is prudent to weigh up the costs of calling out the engineers and growing annual service bills against budgeting for a new system.

More often than not, budgeting for new costs less in the long-term compared to throwing good money after bad in the short-term.

If a new system is called for, beware the pitfalls of buying cheap. Cheaper, lower-quality products have a shorter lifespan – which is not a good thing for something being installed underground!

What's more, leading companies invest a great deal of time and money designing and manufacturing products to perform to the most efficient and advanced standards, so a cheaper system will be less

efficient. If it's cheap, it's cheap for a reason!

Probably the greatest mistake a club can make is to fork out for a new system that then leaves no room for expansion.

So if you decide to invest in a greens system, it is vital you consider there and then whether you will want to expand this into, say, a tees system in the future.

By discussing your present and future needs with a consultant/contractor this can be designed into your system, making it future-proof.

Think about it: if you select a system that is simply designed to irrigate one green at a time then it is specified and costed accordingly.

So if you decide in a few years time that you want to add tees and fairways, the system will not have been designed to cope with this extra requirement.

You will then face the unpleasant prospect of having to upgrade or replace the mains infrastructure to cope with the additional flows and pressures.

Toro has been involved in the replacement of several systems that have been installed for less than 15 years, requiring clubs to make another major investment to

A good system will last between 30 and 50 years if properly maintained and serviced, and should be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of your club

give them the system they originally wanted. Proper long-term planning is, therefore, vital. A good system will last between 30 and 50 years if properly maintained and serviced, and should be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of your club.

Act now

Course Managers are beginning to see a trend in weather patterns, and I think it's safe to say that this early hot, dry spell is a sign of things to come this summer.

Perhaps it's even given you a sneak preview of the kinds of problems you might face in the height of summer.

So if your irrigation system will struggle when things really hot up, act now to keep your course looking good and in perfect playing condition.

about the author



Robert Jackson is Toro Irrigation's UK Sales Manager visit www.toro.com.

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Dreams *can* come true



Dan Quinn will be involved in course preparation at this month's US Open, at the Congressional Country Club, as part of his Ohio State Intern Program. He talks about the preparation he has done and his anticipation ahead of the big event



The 10th Hole of the Blue Course at Congressional Country Club as seen on Thursday, May 20, 2010 in Bethesda, Md. (Copyright USGA/ John Mummert)



If you had told me the first day I started at Woburn that I would get the chance to be involved in the set-up and preparation for a US Open, I would not have believed you. But that dream is coming true this year - thanks to a lot of people - most notably John Clarke, Courses Manager at Woburn, along with valuable support from The Duke of Bedford.

John had the opportunity to participate in the Ohio State University Internship program at Winged Foot where he was involved in the set up for the '97 PGA championship.

I will be forever grateful for this opportunity but I could not have done it without the help of another Woburn supporter and former employee, David McGregor.

David is also a past student of the Ohio Program and is now an assistant at The Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Manassas, Virginia.

I started my internship recently

are kept at lightning speeds and are very undulating with a trend to slope from back to front.

Previously Congressional's greens were 70% Poa and 30% Bentgrass but they have recently been reconstructed and they are now 100% Bentgrass, as are Robert Trent Jones' greens.

In 2009, after the AT&T, the course was closed and the greens rebuild commenced. They were completely rebuilt from a Poa/Bent combination to the Creeping Bentgrass variety which was a combination of A1/A4.

The collars were seeded with Pennncross and all existing drainage and greens profile was removed and new drainage and sub-bases were installed - and the Sub Air units installed. This helped them meet USGA specifications.

The course has also been lengthened by the addition of several new tees in preparation for the US Open and the fairways have been narrowed to really test the players.

This year's US Open will be held over the Blue course which was originally designed by Devereux Emmet, but has been renovated over the years by many architects including Robert Trent Jones

at The Robert Trent Jones GC under David's careful guidance, as I and approximately 10 other carefully selected Ohio State Program interns will be involved in the preparation of Congressional CC for the US Open.

After doing some research I found out that Congressional Country Club has been host to two US Opens, previously in 1964 and 1997, and one PGA championship in 1976.

Congressional is situated in Bethesda, Maryland just outside Washington DC. It is a 36-hole facility with a Gold course and a Blue course.

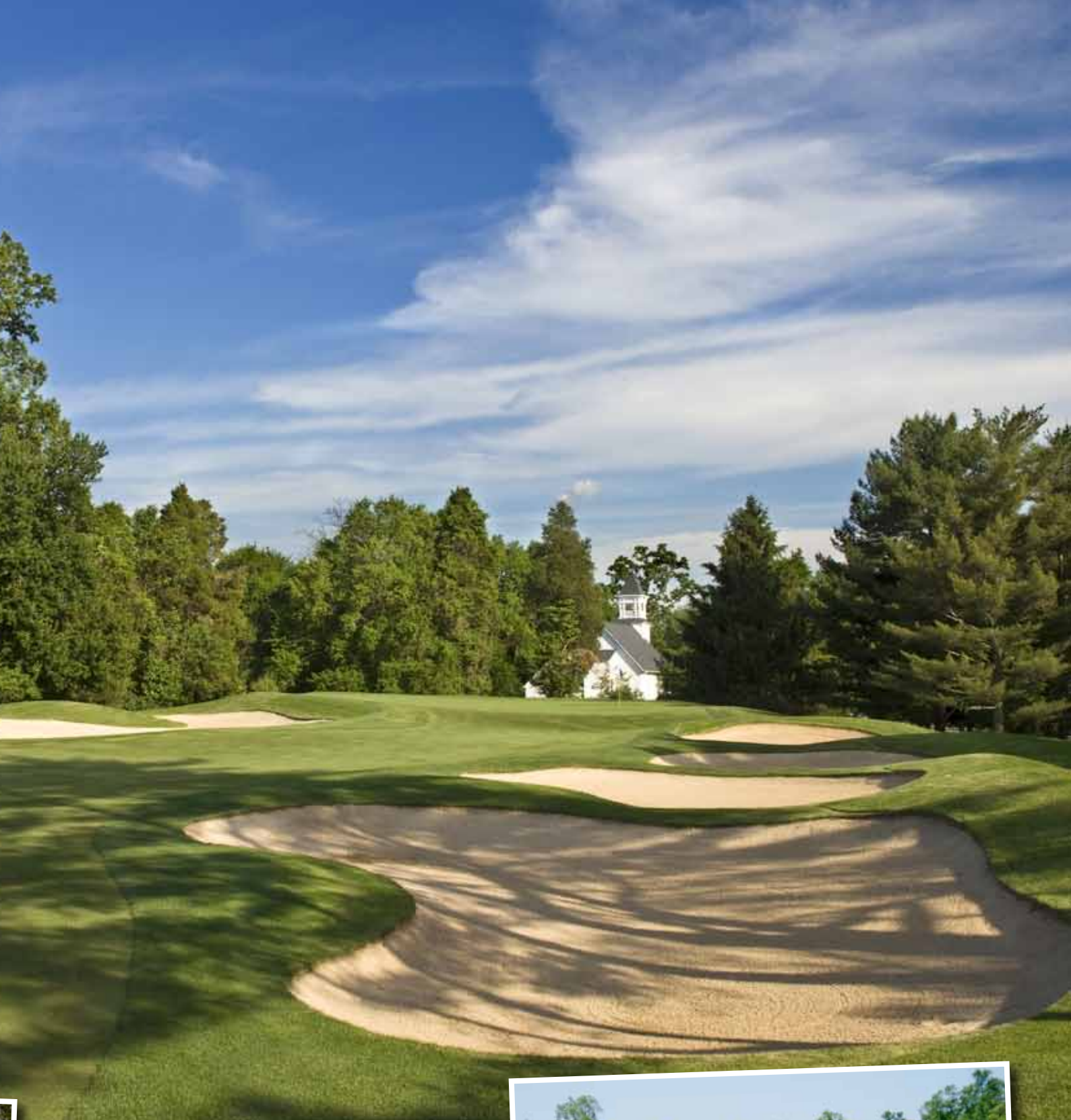
This year's US Open will be held over the Blue course which was originally designed by Devereux Emmet, but has been renovated over the years by many architects including Robert Trent Jones. I am looking forward to comparing the aspects of his design features between Robert Trent Jones Golf Club and Congressional Country Club.

Congressional has similar features to RTJ in that their greens

The experience of being part of the tournament preparation for a Major Championship hasn't really sunk in. After gathering information about Congressional and reading how much work has been and will be put in from now until the Championship begins gives me a taste of what I am in for. Congressional, although host to a PGA tour event every year, has really been pulling out all the stops to be prepared for a US Open, and to show the world what a fantastic venue it really is.

They are planning to have approximately 85 volunteers on hand from some of the best golf courses around the country and the world. Some coming from as far afield as Greece and Australia. They will have 60 full time staff, many of whom are seasoned veterans of previous Tour events. And more than 10 Ohio State interns, past and present will be helping, which is a huge number. It shows me what a great learning environment Congressional want to foster, by making this a truly global learning environment.





On top of that, they have requested the following list of equipment to be on hand:

(6) Flex 21 greens mowers; (8) GR 1000 walk mowers; (3) GR 3150 Triplex mowers; (19) RM 5410 5 Gang Fairway mowers; (3) GM 4500 Rough Rotary units; (2) GM 3500 Rough Rotary units; (1) RM 3100 Sidewinder; (2) SP 5040 Mechanical bunker rake; (12) Electric Workman utility vehicles; (10) Gas Workman utility vehicles; (4) Dump bed for 3200 Workman; (4) Transpro 80 trailers and (4) Transpro 100 trailers.

ABOVE: The 16th Hole of the Blue Course at Congressional Country Club (Copyright USGA/John Mummert)

LEFT: USGA Executive Director Mike Davis and USGA Vice President Thomas J. O'Toole Jr, left to right, walk to the 10th green as seen while setting up the Blue Course for the 2011 U.S. Open at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda (Copyright USGA/John Mummert)

RIGHT: Robert Trent Jones GC, 10th hole



Being part of a Major Championship will be a great addition to my CV or Resume, as they call it over here in the States, and although I have been part of 10 European Tour events during my time at Woburn, this experience will rank high above anything I have achieved or been part of during my career.

I have been at RTJ for a few months and I can safely say that this was the best decision of my life. The experience and lifestyle at RTJ is excellent and highly recommended. Choosing the Ohio State Program has turned out to be a fantastic decision and the experience and exposure to American turf industry has been of the highest calibre, I will soon be working at the US Open and will see tournament setup at its finest, but the best bit is, that I will be able to network with the best in the world all in one place and that is what makes this such a great learning environment.

Like I said, I would never believe you if you told me I'd get the chance to be involved in a US Open, but The Ohio State Program has made this all possible, by recruiting British students who show commitment and dedication to this profession. They have the network, infrastruc-

ture and connections to make this opportunity happen. Ohio State sponsored me to do my training at The Robert Trent Jones Golf Club, knowing that John Clarke had been preparing me for this position for quite a while.

If you want to get on such a program, you have to be single, 19-28 years old, having completed at least your NVQ level 2 and show commitment and dedication to your golf course, you also have to seek out and find as much education and training as possible, to prepare you to represent your College, your golf course and your country in situations like this. The pressure that is involved is clearly more than I expected but it will be well worth it in the long run.

The hours that are planned during the week of the US Open are set to kick off at 4.00am and be done by 7.30am with evening duties to run from 4.00pm to 8.00pm, but they are contingent on the weather.

Congressional have an ample supply of chainsaws, waterpumps, squeegees, bunker rakes and leaf rakes to clear the course in ample time, aided by a solid Sub Air system to get those pros back playing as quickly as possible.

The glorious course that is Robert Trent Jones, showing the 11th hole (BELOW); 1st (RIGHT) and Lake Manassas at night (BOTTOM RIGHT)

In my preparation and training for the US Open, Scott Furlong CGCS, the Director of Operations at The Robert Trent Jones GC, and his staff already had me working longer hours than I would normally do in the middle of the summer in England but I found myself wanting more because every day I was learning something new.

Being a completely different layout and design to what I had been used to helped me to see ways to improve myself.

I soon got used to the long hours and the sudden changes in weather and started to settle into a rhythm showing the assistants my ability and also asking them questions about the course to help me get an understanding of why these tasks are done.

In my first week I did mostly spraying, I spray hawked greens for the first time and was shattered by the 14th green.

It was 30 degrees centigrade and the humidity was unreal, and then the assistant that I was spraying with told me that we were only half way because RTJ has 10 practice greens.

I can safely say I slept well that night!





I also sprayed the fairways with fertilizer and the rough with a pre-emergent for crabgrass, I mowed greens, tees and fairways and helped lay about 20 pallets of sod. By the end of the week I was exhausted and David told me that this was a normal week!

I could now see why RTJ's reputation was so high, the standard that they set themselves is Championship standard and they try to keep the golf course in perfect condition all year round.

RTJ has a crew of around 40 people each day and each one of them are key to keeping the course at championship level. Daily duties include mowing greens, sometimes double cutting to increase green speeds, rolling greens fully then rolling the area around the pin position again, we change pins every day and full rake bunkers too, the tees, approaches and fairways are mowed twice a week and rough each week, bunkers are also edged every week.

Attention to detail is high priority and the assistants will check every inch of the course before morning setup is complete making sure the course meets the member's expectations.

Robert Trent Jones truly is a

Last but not least, I thank John Clarke, Courses Manager at Woburn for making all this possible with his support, and willingness to invest in my career, by letting me have this great experience



wonderful place to be and I feel very fortunate and privileged to be able to be part of their organisation, I am going to make the most of my summer here and I am very lucky to have been given the chance to work here.

I have to thank my family for supporting me, Mike O'Keeffe at Ohio State for believing in me and all the Staff at RTJ for making this a memorable experience, especially Dave McGregor, and last but not least, John Clarke and the Duke of Bedford for making all this possible with their support, and willingness to invest in my career by letting me have this great experience.

By the time you read this, you should at least know a little bit more about what goes into a US Open.



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