

Our 18th Hole, Norman Rockwell

by Joel V. Purpur

Projects on the golf course keep life interesting, and at River Forest Country Club, I haven't been bored yet. Our latest project consisted of excavating two small ponds connected by a creek with water falls, using the soil to rebuild our short practice tee, adding a fairway bunker and green bank mounding on our 18th hole. Most of the construction was routine, but the outcropping stone ledges received a lot of interest.

It all started from the need for a retention pond in a low area to handle runoff from our larger, newly remodeled clubhouse.



Our membership also felt that our 310 yard 18th hole needed to be more dramatic and challenging so we had several different architects analyze the situation and submit concept sketches. The board chose the sketch of Greg Martin of Martin Design Partnership which met all of our objectives.

Since money was tight because of the recent four million dollar clubhouse renovation, we would only contract out the excavation and rough shaping. Bill Boyd of Timberline Construction was chosen for the dirt work and did an excellent job. With the movement of soil being short runs, we moved all 10,000 yards of soil in-house using a caterpillar 3 yard articulated loader donated by a member. This was kind of fun for the first 100 trips. Construction was started in mid August (as soon as we finished landscaping the clubhouse in-house) and rough dirt work was completed in about 3 weeks.

Before we were able to start setting rocks, we had to install our 7 head electric valve in head irrigation on the short range, re-route the irrigation on the 18th hole, re-route power lines, an irrigation main, drainage, hydroseed, sod, and so on. The 18th hole was also one of five we renovated last fall, so #18 was pretty torn up. We were not popular on Ladies Day. The more we completed, the more excited the membership got. When we started installing the rock outcroppings, the gazing and finger pointing really started.



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(Our 18th Hole cont'd.)



Before we began installing rock, we consulted Ed Sagen, grounds superintendent at the McDonald's campus in Oak Brook. They have over a million dollars of this rock on their grounds, so I knew Ed was the one to talk to about the do's and don'ts. The rock is called "outcropping stone", which was purchased from the Halquist Stone Company of Sussex, Wisconsin, which comes either in bulk or on pallets. We purchased the stone on pallets for ease in handling. The stone weighed about 600 to 800 pounds each and are about 4 feet long and 6 - 8 inches thick.



Surface preparation consisted of excavating flat ledges in good undisturbed clay about a foot under the lake level grade. Geotextile fabric was then laid on the clay. Next a 2" layer of gravel was placed on the fabric to fine-tune the grade, and then we were ready for the first layer of outcropping stone. We first used pallet forks on a skid loader from inside the dry pond to place and adjust the rocks, and did the fine tuning by grunting with pry bars. Fitting the angles, thicknesses, and shapes was like putting together a puzzle, picking each stone to match up with the next. More 2" gravel was then added behind and even with the first ledge of rock and we were ready for the second layer. Each layer was set back about 1-3 feet for stability and looks, aiming to be somewhat natural.



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A concrete wall was installed at the waterfall's spillway to avoid erosion, and was then hidden with outcropping stones. By the time we got around to installing the rocks lining the creek, last fall's rains threw us a curve ball in the mud. With it being too muddy for the skid loader, we finished placing the rocks using straps attached to an excavator backhoe which I enjoyed operating. The rocks lining the creek were placed directly on the Geotextile fabric so water would not flow under the outcropping stones, and grades were not as crucial.

The retention pond which is less dramatic, is lined with cobblestones to accommodate the fluctuating water levels caused from runoff. The submersible recirculating pump, which is housed in a concrete vault, uses 2-4" stone to filter the water, and pumps the water back to the upper pond before the waterfall.

We hoped to complete all of the grassing last fall, but with the terrible weather, we'll have to finish the sodding and landscaping this spring. The membership is pleased enough already though to talk about changing the picture on the scorecard.

I'm looking forward to finishing the project and get ready for the tee and bunker renovations planned for 1992. "Never a dull moment!"



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