

Mother Nature and the Polish Culvert

by Tony Rzadzki, Cantigny Golf Club

“Well made plans of mice and men.” Sometimes well made plans can turn into a ‘cheesie’ affair when Mother Nature throws her two cents in. That is exactly what happened to me this past winter.

Cantigny is beginning it’s fourth golf season and major changes have already begun in course redesign. Our nine hole course received the most attention this past winter with the addition of five new bunkers and two new championship tees. A new twelve foot wide cart path, with curbs, has replaced our old and abused eight foot path at our practice green and range facility. Two new novatees are also on the drawing board for this spring at our public range tee. And finally, the Polish culvert adjacent to our old sixteenth green.

The sixteenth green isn’t old and hasn’t changed at all, we just renamed each of our three nine hole courses to Woodside, Lakeside, and Hillside. We will rotate the courses and allow golfers to play according to assigned nines by the pro shop. This is called, ‘The wave’ system of allowing more use of a multi-course facility and allow us a chance to gain more revenue.

Because of the wave, we deemed it necessary to toughen our old nine hole course and make play there on par with the original championship eighteen hole course.

All of the above projects were started and presently are ‘near completion’. Near completion, because Mother Nature this past winter was passive again as she has been for the past few years. To ‘complete’ these projects heavy equipment is a must. Soft and near frozen turf can’t support loaders and trucks, so we had to nitpick and attack each project on the few frosty days that occurred or go out first thing in the morning and come in at a noon and hopefully not track up the course.

The new bunkers are playable but the drain lines haven’t been sodded yet (by the way, it’s raining again today April 16th). The new tees have most of the soil hauled in, but it hasn’t been graded yet. The new cart path has been installed, but the grade work behind the new curbing is half done. The novatee is still in the barn. And the Polish culvert, still looks today as it did when I took these pictures two months ago. We did get some soil over the east end of the tube, then it turned seventy degrees in early March and the frost went away for the season.

Why name this article ... “The Polish culvert?” This project, out of all of the projects I have attempted out here turned out to be the biggest fiasco that this big dumb Pollack ever attempted.

(cont’d. page 21)

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Between frozen water over my boot tops, frozen soil thawing out, ten inch plastic pipe floating on thawed out water, trying to maintain original grade, a rainy cold spring, and not being able to control the lake level that the water flows out of, this Pollack wasn't able to do much except watch Mother Nature mess up some well made plans.

You are all probably thinking, "Well T.R., you bit off more than you can chew". I don't think so, T.R. don't play that. What if we had a "normal" winter and I could have accomplished all of my goals?

If there is a moral to this story I think it is that even if you are a Pollack, a Mick, or a Roundhead Mother Nature is always around to teach us all a lesson. The projects will be completed, but at her own pace not ours.



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