

Dan Quast & Co. Ready Magnificent Medinah for the "Last Major of the Millennium"



Dan Quast (pictured here on #17) revamped this par 3, moving the green back from the water's edge so the hole plays 206 yards rather than its previous 165. The old green, with its 5% slope, was unfair and exasperated even the likes of Jack Nicklaus.

Cathy Ralston

It's being billed as the "Last Major of the Millennium," and it's being held in our own backyard—so to speak. After all, comparing the fabled Medinah

C.C. to anybody's backyard is some sort of sacrilege.

For the last three years, Medinah's grounds manager Dan Quast, CGCS, and his staff have been preparing Course #3—

Chicagoland's top-rated links and one of the top 20 courses nationwide — for the PGA Championship, which will run here August 9-15.

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Dan Quast & Co. Ready . . .

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Why Medinah? "The PGA wanted to be in a major city," Dan said. "At Medinah, we have the space to host a tournament like the Championship and accommodate all of the tents and extracurricular activities. Our 600+ members are eager to volunteer and very happy to become part of the tournament. And we have experience with this caliber of event, having hosted the U.S. Open in 1990."

Getting ready to host a Major is no small feat, which is why Dan recommends accomplishing as much as possible long before the event.

To that end, Dan has in recent years overseen the rebuilding of five greens—#1, 2, 13, 16 and 17. "The slopes on the old greens were not consistent with today's game of golf and limited pin settings," Dan explained. "We also narrowed a couple fairways,

specifically #1 and 15, in preparation for the Championship."

Moreover, "we added 3" of sand to all greenside bunkers this winter," noted Dan. "We feel our sandtraps are in very good condition for the tournament, and we will reevaluate with tournament director Kerry Haigh as we approach the event."

The countdown begins

As of early July, Medinah

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Medinah by the Numbers

7,401

Number of yards Course #3 will play during the Championship

340

Number of CBS Sports staffers who will live onsite for a week in a 3.5-acre media village

11,000

Number of bleacher seats that will be available for tourney patrons

40 million

Projected worldwide TV audience tuning in to tourney coverage on CBS, the Golf Channel, TNT, CNNsi and Japanese TV, among others

58

Number of sandtraps on Course #3

45,000

Number of spectators expected at Medinah C.C. each day of the tournament



Course #3's "toughest hole," according to Dan, is 452-yard #16. The mesh netting pictured here covers the spot where balls typically come to rest after hitting the apron, then rolling down the 45-degree slope. Dan and crew placed the netting to prevent golfers from carving out divots in that area in the weeks before the Championship.



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looked stunning. "Keeping the course mowed and sprayed for fungus are our top priorities until a couple weeks before the tournament," Dan said. "Then, we will make some adjustments, including lowering the height of cut on fairways to no higher than 3/8" and increasing the speed of greens to an 11.5 or 12 Stimpmeter reading."

While Medinah members will be able to play Course #3 until mere days before the Championship, they were not able to use carts after mid-July. And as August drew near, they probably noticed that the rough was more eager to gobble up their shots. Primary rough will hover near 4" for the event, while intermediate rough will be cut to 1".

During the Championship

Some 45,000 spectators per day will surge across Medinah's rolling, wooded terrain. That figure is staggering enough, but then consider that another 40 million people worldwide will be watching on TV.

"It's important to me to present our course well to the country and the world," said Dan. To that end, staff will remove dead branches from Medinah's hallmark oaks and shagbark hickories for the tournament. Explained Dan, "This will add to the beauty of the camera shots and really show off the character of Medinah."

Aesthetics are only part of the equation, however. Attention to detail will be critical during tournament time, and Dan has

ample staff and equipment to keep Course #3 pristine for the pros.

Months prior to the Championship, Dan divided Course #3 into four sections. Dan's assistants Keith Peterson and Reynaldo Tijerina, as well as Jon Thronson (superintendent of Course #1) and Erik Swenson (superintendent of Course #2), will each assume responsibility for one area of the course. The group has been meeting weekly with Dan since May to develop a plan of attack and form work teams.

With the details relegated to Keith, Reynaldo, Jon and Erik, Dan will be freer to concentrate on the big picture. "My main concerns will be overall course conditions and green speeds—making sure green speeds are consistent throughout the week."

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At 583 yards, #14 is unforgiving—and approaching the green is no picnic, either. (But it might be "a day at the beach!")

Dan Quast & Co. Ready . . .

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About 30-35 volunteers (superintendents and employees from other courses) are expected to help Dan's regular staff of 65 keep #3—the area “inside the ropes”—immaculate during the Championship by filling in where necessary—operating equipment, filling divots, fluffing the rough. Moreover, Textron, through vendor Illinois Lawn Equipment, is furnishing 15 additional riding green mowers for cutting the fairways and 10 extra Cushman utility carts. Medinah will also borrow rollers from two Wisconsin golf courses. All additional equipment was expected onsite by July 20.

The aftermath

The week after the Championship, Dan expects 500 trucks to rumble in and remove all of the tournament fixtures—the tents, TV equipment, furniture, A/C units, etc. Meanwhile, he and his staff will embark on the process of restoring the course. Foot traffic extracts a heavy toll, said Dan; it may take several years for the turf to regain its former vigor. And it is not only Course #3 that will require work.

Course #1 has lost two fairways to incoming deliveries via four new gates installed on Medinah Road and structures such as the Wanamaker Tent and Champions Tent. “We will be performing seeding and aerifying after the Championship, but those fairways won't see play again until next year,” Dan said. “This is another example of the sacrifices our members have made in order to be able to host this event.”

“I'm taking nothing for granted”

With the PGA Championship only weeks away, Dan acknowledged the benefits of experience and the difficulties



Insider tip for spectators: “My favorite hole early is #12,” said Dan. “It's beautiful, challenging and offers some shade.”

inherent in hosting a Major in mid-August.

“Doing the U.S. Open made me a historian,” said Dan. “We are better prepared because we know what to expect this time. So we're managing one day at a time and hoping to get to the tournament in good shape.

“I'm taking nothing for granted,” Dan continued. “Anyone who grows grass knows the pitfalls that can happen during the months of July and August. Grass-wise, this is the most stressful time. But everybody here has a can-do attitude and is well-prepared for the Championship.”

