

## Michael Sauls Tackles a \$2 Million Renovation at Butler National

Anyone who has had the pleasure of playing Butler National might not recognize the need for a few extra yards and more consistent greens, but those are just a few of the anticipated results of the upcoming improvements scheduled for the fall of 2004. Last fall, the membership approved a \$2 million renovation for the nationally recognized layout, which was originally designed by Tom and George Fazio and opened in 1974. Mike states that the green speed issue was at the heart of what needed addressing; ultimately, it was determined that closing the course and regrassing was the only way to go. At this point, it only made sense to address other needs and the scope of the project increased from there.

In mid-August, Butler National will begin fumigating and regrassing greens, rebuilding all of the bunkers, adding 14 more bunkers, adding tees that will increase the yardage by 100 to 150 yards, making improvements to the existing irrigation system and removing several trees. After testing several options onsite, Mike is leaning towards A-4 on the greens and using one of the angular sands from Ohio in the bunkers. In addition to better

bunker sand, depth in the bunkers will be created where possible. In general, the fairway bunkers will be pushed 20 to 30 yards down the fairway to better challenge the players and technology of the day. While the additional yards will bring the overall length to nearly 7,400, the par will decrease by one to 71, a result of making hole no. 12 a long par 4.

Tom Marzolf, senior associate architect with Fazio Design, has been onsite several times and Mike estimates four different plans were considered before finally taking a proposal to the board of directors. The improvements this fall are the first phase of a more long-term plan that will include the removal of non-native plant species and creation of a more natural look for the edges of the water hazards. In addition to the cost of construction, the club is budgeting for another half-million dollars of lost revenue and employee compensation. The plans call for Butler National to reopen June 1st of 2005.

—Brian Bossert, CGCS  
Bryn Mawr

## Tom Gray's Driving Range Renovation at Olympia Fields Country Club

The MAGCS would like to welcome Tom Gray to the Chicagoland area. Tom comes to Olympia Fields C.C. from Michigan, where he still plans to moonlight as a volunteer member of the Comerica Park grounds crew for the Detroit Tigers' opening day and the 2005 All Star game. As for his day job, Tom is busy getting situated in his new role as superintendent of Olympia Fields, organizing his staff, preparing to renovate the driving range and planning for a successful 2004.

Tom's first order of business this spring is renovating the club's driving range. Tom will draw upon past experience for this project, as he has completed three other driving range renovations during his tenures at Oakland Hills Country Club, Franklin Hills Country Club and Fieldstone Golf Club. Besides creating a more functional and aesthetically pleasing range facility for Olympia Fields' members, the final product will also be better suited to host major tournament events.

Step one of the renovation will be upgrading the current irrigation system on the driving range and tee. All of the work will be done in-house. The plan for the range fairway calls for four rows of Rainbird 700-series heads with approximately 40 heads total. The tee will have three rows of Rainbird 700-series heads with approximately 10 heads total. Additionally, about four rows of mister heads with approximately 25 heads total will also be installed on the tee. Tom points out that each row of mister heads will be independently controlled so that if the markers are set up at the front of the tee, the mister heads can run during the day on the back portion of the tee. The result is better germination and quicker recovery.

The highlight of the new driving range will be a bentgrass fairway . . . seven acres of bentgrass fairway, to be exact. This is the next phase of the renovation. Tom anticipates starting this phase in early April, but notes that soil temperatures would dictate the actual date. The first

step would be to mark off a clearly defined area. Next, the area was to be scalped down and treated with Roundup, followed two to three days later by seeding. The area was to be slit-seeded with an L-93/Pennway blend at 1 lb./1,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. Tom's primary influences for choosing L-93 and Pennway are dollar-spot resistance and price, respectively. Seeding will be followed up with an application of a starter fertilizer.

Because he's seeding into an existing canopy, Tom calls on experience to determine that two to three weeks of keeping the range picker off the new fairway will be required. During that time, the entire range would be hand-picked. From that point on, it's a matter of nursing the turf along towards maturity. At that juncture, Tom's expectation is to treat the driving range fairway like it were any other one of his fairways. That entails mowing three times per week with a 5-plex mower at a cutting height of 0.400±, approximately eight fungicide applications plus a preventative snow mold application per year, and insecticide/herbicide applications as needed. No plant growth regulator treatments will be made, however.

Tom's daily maintenance program for the range tee employs three staff members each morning, seven days a week. Divots are blown, the tee is mowed at 0.400± with a triplex unit, and all divots are filled with an annual ryegrass/perennial ryegrass mixture. In the fall, a low-mow Kentucky bluegrass will be selected for overseeding in order to further encourage a quicker recovery rate.

The final phase of the driving range renovation will take place in the fall, when an additional 30% of teeing surface will be constructed along the back and right side of the existing tee.

—Brian Mores  
Inverness Golf Club

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