

FEATURE I

Nick Marfise, *Park Ridge Country Club*

Irrigation Demo Hole



The hot weather this August through October was a good argument for a new irrigation system. With the economy the way it is, spending a few million dollars on a completely new irrigation system may not be feasible. Collaboration with Liebold Irrigation, Inc., and Rain Bird® has allowed Park Ridge Country Club to be the first golf course in the Chicagoland area to have the newest technology in golf course irrigation.

A single golf hole at Park Ridge will feature the new Rain Bird® Integrated Control system (IC system™), which was installed using HDPE pipe. Using the existing mainlines on the course, a 3-row fairway design was installed, upgrading from our old 2-row system. There will also be an increase in tee, rough, and bunker sprinkler heads. The design for the green and perimeter heads remains the same. There will be an increase in isolation valves and ground faulting as well. Rain Bird's IC modules were compatible with our current drip irrigation valves, so steep-faced bunkers can now be programmed from our central computer.

Rain Bird's IC system eliminates field satellites and miles of underground wire. The system uses a single Maxi wire running directly from the central computer to each individual sprinkler head, simplifying communication. The IC module, located on the irrigation head in place of the solenoid, does

the job of both the solenoid and the field satellites. Direct communication to each head offers state-of-the-art troubleshooting and installation. Rain Bird's IC system is similar to other decoder type irrigation systems on the market in both function and quality. Faced with many choices, we decided to go with Rain Bird's new technology for this project. Research was key in finding the right system for our facility.

Replacing heads that were 90 feet on center with heads that are now on 65 foot centers will lower water costs. This reduction is due to accurate sprinkler coverage and better water management. With better water distribution and coverage we water the fairway less often, which increases playability. We can achieve a firmer fairway, which will allow for more ball roll. Precision watering creates less inconvenience and frustration

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because it requires less day-time syringing and hand watering. Better coverage creates greater consistency and healthier turf, resulting in less dead *Poa annua*.

Our decision to install the Rain Bird® IC system™ gives us state-of-the-art benefits in design, technology, and hardware. It offers troubleshooting from the central computer. With a click of the mouse you can see, on your computer screen, the health of the IC modules and the voltage running to each head. Because the maxi wire is the only communication wire on the course, you have the ability to tap right into the maxi wire to add additional sprinklers to the golf course. You no longer have to run wires from the computer, to the satellites, and then back to the sprinkler heads themselves.

By installing the system using HDPE pipe, we gain other benefits. It is much stronger than traditional PVC and less liable to damage from shifting or settling ground, heavy equipment haul roads, freezing and thawing, etc. Fewer pipe breaks means less risk of shut down for repairs, which can be critical during hot weather conditions.

Finally, this project offers other benefits. It gives the membership a chance to see the installation process on a single hole and to compare the course improvements prior to a full-scale investment. With better water coverage, the installation allows us to create and implement a *Poa annua* control program. Eliminating *Poa annua* and introducing a higher percentage of bentgrass in our fairways gives us both long-term and short-term agronomic benefits. **-OC**

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