



Palm Beach Trade Winds



By MICHAEL J. BAILEY
Boca Greens Country Club

Par 3, Executive Municipals: A Vital Link To Success Of Golf

Ultraexclusive, meticulously maintained and the Golf capital of the world. These are common adjectives for golf courses throughout Palm Beach County. However let us continue one phrase further — “the garden spot of the world”. There are several communities nestled throughout the world, boasting of established wealth and class, yet there is no place quite as majestic as beautiful Palm Beach. All too often we associate the exclusive country club as the standard to judge all by, but for this issue of the Florida Green, the topic is of a totally different type of operation that we often overlook — the Par 3, Executive and Municipal courses. They are a vital link to the continuing success of introducing golf to the non-members country club golfer, who wishes to pursue the game. Within this realm, we will explore this topic as shown by the cover photo revealing the 7th hole at the Palm Beach Par 3 Golf Club. The course is found deep in the heart of the most choice piece of real estate in America. The course is nestled within 35 acres of land with an estimated value exceeding 35 million dollars. The course was designed by Mr. Dick Wilson and built in 1960 between the shore of the Atlantic and the seawall of the Intracoastal Waterway.

The 2450 yard course is composed of 18 Par 3 holes with lengths varying from a testy 99 yards to a demanding 221 yards. The greens average 2400 square feet in putting surface, while there are 13 strategic traps to play havoc with your accuracy.

If you are one to assume short courses are relatively easy to play — guess again! This course possesses all the demanding elements to rattle your scorecard, whereupon

a sub-par round is a rarity. The geographic location of four golf holes paralleling the ocean just 200 feet from the pounding surf, not to mention the consistently strong offshore winds, four lakes which come into play on seven holes, respective elevations within the sand dunes, the ever-present Intracoastal Waterway just waiting to swallow your shots on three holes, and the overall beauty of Palm Beach, (whew!). One tends to find the game of golf here to be extremely demanding, yet exceedingly enjoyable and relaxing.

Let us profile the typical par 3 golfer, as they are an interesting breed within our golf culture. Usually, their playing ability is somewhat limited, either by playing skills, physical capabilities, finances or perhaps even their desire to pursue the game seriously and instead just play golf for a relaxing form of exercise and enjoyment. A smaller, shorter course is commonly desired because of the ease to play, not to mention a shorter length of time



“Walkers are a common site at Par 3, note minimum of clubs to ease the load.”

(Continued on page 21)

FOR MAXIMUM TURFGRASS AT MINIMUM EXPENSE!



ROBERT L. WILLCOX

1261 S.W. 27th Place
Boynton Beach, Fla. 33435

EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL
SOIL TESTING ANALYSIS
COMPLETE AGRONOMIC
PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

(305) 736-2056



QUALITY FERTILIZERS SINCE 1904

(Continued from page 20)

consumed to play. When compared to their playing on a championship layout, a longer course would not be enjoyable and perhaps they would retire from the game as over 50% of the players are elderly couples over the age of 60. Their handicaps are generally high (usually over 36), they play several times a week and are often on a fixed income. Their etiquette is generally poor. Failure to repair ball marks and divots, dragging their feet, playing with range balls and other caddyshack mannerisms are commonly observed. The key factor to the success of such operations, however, is the fact that the golfers enjoy themselves.

The ability for such a piece of real estate to pay for itself in operating expense is a credit to its clientele. The course is owned by the Town of Palm Beach. The Golf Commission advises on the operations, while the Town Manager ultimately oversees all decisions. If one is to closely scrutinize the facility, one will easily appreciate why the club is such a success. The condition of maintenance is excellent! Because of this, the golfers patronize their facility. Such quality which is more commonly found at the exclusive private clubs, can be credited to the outstanding golf course superintendent, Mr. Pete Brooks. Since his employment in September of 1980, the past four years of hard work is evident. Upon my recent visit for the writing of this article, I found the course to be in superb condition. The greens putt true, all is groomed to perfection, the turf is exceptionally healthy and there is very little to improve upon. Such quality is not uncommon, when considering Mr. Brook's background: a graduate of Lake City Community College in 1977 and the assistant superintendent at the Atlantis Golf Club, a community where Mr. Brooks credits his exposure to a high quality country club whereupon his training now exudes at the Palm Beach Par 3. Mr. Brooks is a credit to our industry; not to mention the game of golf, as Pete, who takes his game serious, has been known to tour many courses at even or near par. Mr. Brooks is not known to sit back and take it easy, but rather stands up and is active within his operations, as he and a work staff of two are constantly busy striving for perfection.

This type of operation is quite abnormal as compared to the so called bigger clubs. Let us examine the style of operation as perhaps many outsiders are unfamiliar with what all must still be done to maintain a so called smaller facility like a Par 3 course. Mr. Brooks, like most of us, has a budget to submit and be approved, while his expenditures are regulated on a government basis. Salaries are set by city standards, as they are government employees for the Town of Palm Beach. A budgeted operating expense of \$125,000 this past year at first might sound high to some individuals. We all realize the proper procedures for good maintenance and to fulfill the total spectrum, no short cuts can be allowed. Considering most everything needed to be performed on a large course must also be performed on a Par 3 course, the stated budget actually seems low.

Can you imagine what it would be like at your club, if you were to restrict all your play to within 25% of your given acreage. Obviously, the course would quickly show stress, however, this is exactly what Mr. Brooks must

contend with everyday — heavy play within a very small given space. The wear factors alone can play havoc with his program. The greens are aerified with the drum type at least six times per year. Verticutting is often performed to minimize grain on such a wind swept location. The Bermuda 328 greens are mowed as tight as nature will permit as 5/32 is the standard. Fertilization of the greens with frequent light applications is constantly aiding new growth, as the program averages 24 lbs. of N/1,000 sq. ft./grn /yr. A preventative rather than a curative concept is employed throughout Mr. Brook's program as he tries to stay on top of everything. There was an interesting occurrence with mother nature on the day that I visited that non agronomic people overlook.

Being so close to the ocean, the wind is constantly blowing. Even though on that day, the wind was a rather mild 15 mph, Pete says "wait until winter, when its constantly blowing at 40 MPH." Spraying, irrigation, dehydration and salt burn are common problems, The salty wind can become so severe, actual leaf tip burn looks much like fertilizer burn - afterall, the principles are the same. To compensate, irrigation can aid with washing off the salts and a few days later, mowing off the leaf tips will produce new green shoots until the next stiff wind comes. Mr. Brooks also acknowledges, the salty air even reduces the life expectancy of equipment. Frequent, thorough hosing off still cannot eliminate the problem as paint dulls quickly and rust is frequent.



Grandparents playing golf with their grandson. Carrying hand bags and walking are a common practice.

It seems so ironic to be so close to mother nature's beauty, yet everything is not ideal, as she ultimately controls all. Mr. Brooks has been working on evaluating the most ideal plants that are best adapted to his conditions. He does not want to over landscape and create extra maintenance. Landscaped windbreaks in isolated regions of the course has aided in blocking the wind and protecting the turf. Strategically located pockets of Seagrapes, Sabal Palms and other adaptable plants are beneficially beautifying the course. Mr. Brooks' goals are to beautify the course and achieve turf maintenance to the best level attainable within his capabilities of the budget and the geographic location.

It seems a course smaller in size would be easier to maintain, yet we of the profession are the first to realize this is far from true. Let it be known, there is no such thing as a small job for a golf course superintendent. There may be small golf courses, but the intensity of responsibility is just as severe — "if not more so per given acre." ■