

PREPARING TOURNEY SITE IS MAJOR TASK FOR LUPER

By ED HAVER
Sun correspondent

If you think King Kong had a gargantuan assignment trying to climb the Empire State building using just one arm, what about the task that faced John Luper?

Who, you might ask, is John Luper. Well John Luper is a fine Clearwater gentleman who once was the greens superintendent at Clearwater Country Club. From there he moved to Countryside Country Club and on Oct. 10 he took over the same duties at Bardmoor Country Club.

At Bardmoor he assumed control and the responsibility for three golf courses and one of them, the North course, was going to be the site of the JC-Penney Mixed Team Classic in less than two months. If you don't think that was a hazardous position to walk into, then you don't know the difference between an agronomist and an astrologist.

But last week Luper said he is satisfied with what he has accomplished in the short time he has been in command.

"With the time frame we had to work in we're as ready as can be," said the likeable greens superintendent who has held the position of president of the West Coast Superintendent's Association for the past two years.

Luper's task was made more difficult by the mixed team format of the tournament. It pairs members of both the Professional Golfers Association and the Ladies Professional Golfers Association together against other such duos. It meant that Luper had to satisfy representatives of both groups.

"Actually they just set guidelines for us," said Luper. "It's up to the individual club or greens superintendent to try to meet their standards, but to do it in their own way."

What the pro groups want are fairways that are cut as short as possible and greens that register nine feet on the Stimp Meter. The Stimp Meter is a device that determines the speed of the greens. Nine feet is fast but not nearly as quick as usually can be found in the major tournaments.

"The greens were my biggest problem by far," admitted Luper. "It's just the worse time of year for having good greens."

Of necessity, Luper overseeded with rye grass. "But we had to do it earlier than I liked. Right now, though, we've got a good stand of rye on all the greens and they should be fine for the tournament. The fairways came in real strong, and if the weather stays warm they should be a dark green. We'll cut them to 7/16ths of an inch for the tournament, which is what they like."

So far everything has fallen into place. About the only external force that could cause some trouble is a severe rain. "Drainage is a problem for us but you don't expect a gulley-washer this time of year," Luper said.

With the tournament just days away it's getting more and more exciting for Luper. "This is my first major tournament, so I've been a little nervous just thinking about it."

However, the groundwork has been done and when the tourney actually begins most of Luper's problems will either have been solved or be obvious to the participants. He will have nothing to do with the pin placements or the tee markers, that's taken care of by the staff members of the two organizations. So any complaints must be addressed to those responsible. But if you think Luper will be able to relax, you're still confusing astronomy and agronomy. ■

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