



Palm Beach Trade Winds



By: Mike Bailey Boca Green Country Club

Who Says Equipment Doesn't Have Fingerprints?

Vandalism is nearly impossible to deter on a 400-acre, 36-hole golf course, even if you had all the clout of all the king's horses and all the king's men. The fact is, unless the property is totally secured by fences, dense woods or canals, you can best expect to be vandalized at least once a year.

Such was the case years back. Early one morning, just at the crack of dawn, the greensmower operators were returning to the shop with all reports the same "we were hit on the greens last night. The first instinct is "boy, would I like to get my hands on those kids." Well actually this dream wasn't so far off base. I have found that anytime one tends to joy ride a golf course via cars or trucks, "finger prints are evident." By examining the width of the tracks one can conclude if the vehicle is a compact, such as a VW, a large sedan Beer wagon such as an old Chevy Impala, or perhaps the most devastating of all, 4-wheel drive trucks and Jeeps. I have found that in the early morning dew, the fresh silt sand tracks of the tread patterns fingerprints. Along the edges of various cart paths, within the sandtraps and locations on the greens where the grass was shredded down to the soil level, a distinctive tread tire pattern was revealed. Being an avid amateur sports car racing enthusiast, one tends to learn about the brand of tires, softness of compounds, and especially the design of tread patterns and character of "fingerprints." My first goal was to assess the course and to evaluate just how severe the damage was. Fresh dew tracks on the grass were trailed throughout 10 golf holes and severe spinning to 7 greens. As I began to follow the trail, I began to observe a consistent pattern taking place. The width of the tires were of a medium

narrow width (that of a sports car); the rear tires were generally spinning most of the time (a rear wheel driven car); and most characteristic of all, the tread foot print was that of a Michelin XAS radial tire, an expensive European tire more commonly found on Sports Cars. By further scrutinizing of the tires, I noticed an odd peculiarity. The right rear tire was not a match with the other three radial tires (appearing to be a less expensive, non-radial spare tire). As I filed my police report, I noted this observation to the patrolman upon where he punched into the computer and revealed the various reports form the previous night dealing with youths and automobile related incidents. Sure enough! Within the same town last night, a juvenile had stolen from his father's garage a Datsun 240Z. The alleged youth had taken a joy ride, which ultimately led into a police chase pursuit where the youth crashed the car into a concrete street sign. A further investigation revealed just what I was hoping for. The right rear tire of the impounded car was not a match to the (you guessed it) other three Michelin XAS tires. Now it was beginning to add up very quickly. The youth stole the car from the house just down the street, took a joy ride throughout the golf course and then proceeded onto the highways whereupon he was ultimately arrested. Later the youth admitted to the crime on the golf course. I felt, not relieved, because there was much work spent on repairing the golf course back to normal, but at least, the kid didn't get by without getting caught. Hopefully the youth will be one less person terrorizing our golf courses at night. He probably thought that since it was nighttime, no one would ever see him and he would never get caught. ■

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