

Central Florida Crowfoots



A Closer Look At The New Grand Cypress Golf Club

By JOEL JACKSON

Tom Alex is a very busy young man. In fact, Tom has been busy since June 1983 when he became the Superintendent of the Grand Cypress Golf Club. Most of you know by now that the Grand Cypress Club is the new golf course that Jack Nicklaus has designed with a Scottish flair and a definite distinctive look quite different from other area courses. Ground clearing for the course began in February, 1982 in a 160 acre area of old citrus groves. The resulting sandy soil with some hardpan was blended and worked into a good mix that Tom says drains well even after some pretty hard rains. The only major problem during construction was the erosion on some of the plateau ledges and severe trap and mound faces from heavy rains which had to be reworked and backfilled. The course was planted with Tifdwarf greens and Tifdwarf II tees, fairways, and roughs. The unique sculpted, mini-alp-like mounds bordering each hole were seeded with Bahia grass and millet. The golf course opened for play on December 15, 1983.

Tom came to Grand Cypress after serving as an assistant Superintendent and acting Superintendent at the Tournament Players Club at Ponte Vedra, Florida. Before coming to Florida, Tom worked at Washington Golf Club in Washington, Connecticut after graduating from the Stockridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts in 1981 where he earned his degree in Turf Management. Tom is quick to praise his staff for the fine efforts they have made in grooming the course to its excellent condition. He is assisted by Sigrid Drew (landscape), David Pedersen (course maintenance), Wayne Pixley (head mechanic), and a crew of 26. Tom's staff is responsible for maintaining the 18 hole course, a 9 hole pitch and putt course at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, and the landscape around the clubhouse and north entrance complex.

Because of the small greens and tees, plateaued fairways, severe slopes and pot bunkers, a lot of handmowing is required. It takes four people two days to flymow all

appropriate areas with part of a third day to touch up anything needed or missed. HF-5 hydraulic mowers are used on the fairways and roughs and mowable slopes.

Irrigation of the golf course is accomplished by two Vari-time II Master Controllers with 88 satellites and 1,250 Toro valve-in-head sprinklers. The system is supplied by a combination of well and effluent water. Due to the sandy soil mix, Tom uses only slow release fertilizer at a rate of 1 lb. N per month on the fairways and 1 lb. N every 3 weeks on greens in the summer and 1/2 lb. N during the winter supplemented with iron.

Speaking of winter, Tom had just overseeded his greens with a blend of 50% Poa Trivialis, 25% Red Top Bentgrass, and 25% Penneagle Creeping Bentgrass. The rest of the course except the mounds was seeded with ryegrass. Tom is constantly working on those distinctive mounds to reach a relatively uniform 2 foot high grassy mound. To that end broad leaf weeds are selectively sprayed out and pre-emergent herbicides are used to protect surrounding turf areas from weed seed germination. Tom has had only a few instances of goose grass and soft crabgrass intrusion. This year he is going to try some wildflowers in those grassy mounds.

Last June Tom assumed responsibility for the landscape of the clubhouse and north entrance areas, and word is out that an additional 12 holes will be started this fall. Nine holes will be of regulation length differing from the original 18 by having more woods and water and less severe sloping and more easily mowable mounds. The other 3 holes, consisting of a Par 3, 4, and 5 will be used for golf instruction. In addition, Tom must provide some support for the construction of a railway that runs from the hotel to the clubhouse and is requiring relocation of some of the original irrigation system. Also, 50 villas to be started next year are planned between the first and third holes with four more phases possible in the future. Tom will be responsible for their landscaping. Like I said, Tom Alex is a very busy young man. ■