

*Lake Region Country Club
Winter Haven
Number 5*

Photos by Brian Everhart



Number 16 shows tall pines.

*Lake Region
Yacht & CC*

BY PHILIP PETTUS

Picturesque country club enters the computer era

Tall pines, a scenic lake, wildlife wandering to and from the surrounding woods — they all contribute to the natural tranquility of Lake Region Yacht and Country Club, near Winter Haven.

No houses, no interstate highways in the horizon, no businesses, no street sounds. Except for the club's buildings and facilities, there's just flora and fauna and a peaceful lake surrounding you.

"This country club is like country clubs were meant to be in the beginning, a place to get away from the city," said Lake Region Golf Course Superintendent R. Alan Puckett.

"There are no reminders of the city as you walk around the course," he said. "I've seen foxes, alligators, otters, bobcats, cranes, herons, eagles, hawks and owls," Puckett said. He said that when someone comes out for the first time, most often as a guest, "they usually have an experience they remember."

A private club in Central Florida that dates back to 1924, the LRY&CC boasts a total of 960 members, including 550 golfing families. The 83

people on the waiting list can expect to wait up to five years to join, he said.

At one time, sailing and regattas were a part of the club's activities, hence the word "Yacht" in the name. Presently sailing is not a major activity and the club is focused on golf, tennis and swimming as major activities. But the club president is still called the Commodore.

The 200-acre stand has about 110 acres of turf, Puckett said. Overseeing a crew of 17, he is responsible for all the "growing" assets of the club. In addition, Puckett and his crew do just about anything that requires manpower.

"If they (other departments) have something to move, and no one else is available, then we're the ones they call. That's pretty normal for private clubs," he said.

"If there's a ball to be picked up and carried, then we do it."

While engaged in summer maintenance projects, such as deep-tine aerification to alleviate soil compaction, Puckett said a major upgrade is taking place with the irrigation system. Lake Region is a test site for a Network LTC irrigation system that will have the first-ever computer-controlled loop system by Toro.

"This will be a state-of-art system," Puckett said. "The new wave of golf course management is going to computerized irrigation controllers," he said.

Toro has another very extensive and sophisticated system but the one being tested at Lake Region is a simpler version that requires a PC computer. It will operate Lake Region's older electrical irrigation system (rather than the newer type of hydro-



The 16th hole, alternate perspective.

lic systems).

Puckett said Toro selected Lake Region because it had the electrical system and because the area is prone to a high incidence of lightning. These circumstances will give a stern test for reliability and durability. The irrigation end was installed in April and the central controller is scheduled to arrive in August. It will control all irrigation for the entire golf course from Puckett's office.

"They gave it to us and installed it and will maintain it," Puckett said. In exchange, Lake Region will send Toro monthly reports on the weather and system use which

Toro will use in future product development and design.

Thus, this "old" picturesque country club enters the computerized maintenance era.

Originally established in the "old style" (meaning "pretty flat"), Puckett said the course had undertaken two major projects in the last eight years.

In 1983, the back nine was reconstructed with undulations and elevations, giving the course more challenge. In 1987, the same type of redesign by architect Dean Refram was done to the front nine and the course took on a more contemporary and challenging character.



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The greens are Tifdwarf while Tifton 419 bermudagrass is used on the tees, fairways and roughs.

With such a rich trove of nature, keeping both the club members and the wildlife protected are high-priority considerations.

"We are always concerned with giving proper notification of chemical use and spraying schedules through the pro shop," Puckett said.

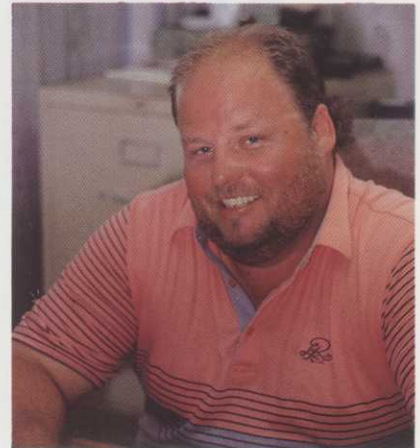
Puckett, a relatively young superintendent at 31, has been the superintendent at LRY&CC for 15 months, coming there from nearby Grenelefe Resort. This is his first superintendent's job, but he believes he has gotten valuable experience in a variety of jobs since he graduated from Lake City Community College's golf course operations curriculum with an Associate of Science in 1981.

Previously he has worked at World Of Palm Aire in Pompano Beach where he was irrigation technician for all of its five courses, at Walden Lake Country Club near Plant City where he was assistant superintendent, and at Greenlefe near Haines City

"I have fun doing this job every day and I enjoy the feeling of achievement at the end of day when I see what's been accomplished."

R. Alan Puckett

Golf Course Superintendent
Lake Region Yacht & Country Club



Age: 31

Education: Lake City Community College, A.A. in Golf course operations.

Professional Involvement: Ridge Golf Course Superintendent's Association, the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Florida Turf Grass Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. As external vice president for the Ridge association, he is a board member of the FGCSA.

Goal: Getting his GCSAA certification.

Previous employment: World Of Palm Aire (Pompano Beach), Walden Lake Country Club (Plant City), Greenlefe (Haines City).

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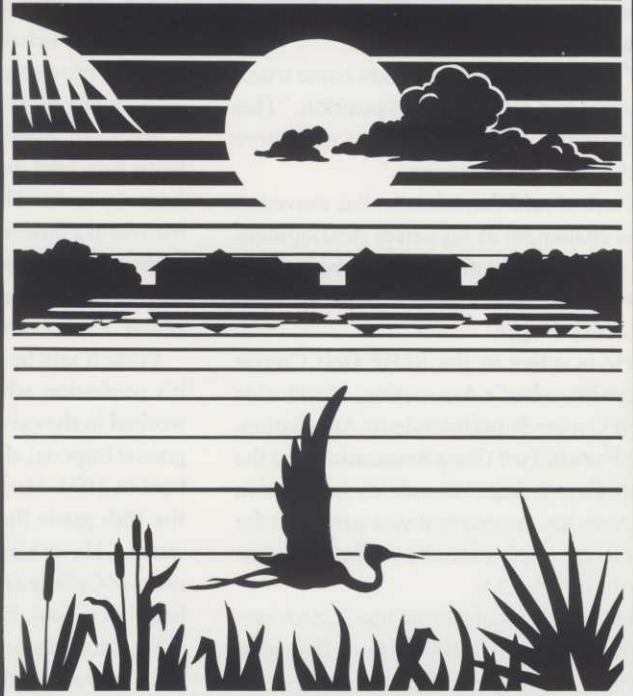
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Lake Region
Number 11

where he was superintendent of the West course.

“To have this job is a dream come true,” Puckett said off his current position. “This is definitely one of the nicest and more exclusive clubs in the area.”

Puckett said that while he has moved to new challenges in his career development — changing jobs about every two to three years — he wants to stay at LRY&CC considerably longer.

He is active in the Ridge Golf Course Superintendent’s Association, the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Florida Turf Grass Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. As external vice president for the Ridge association, he is a board member of the FGCSA.

He has a goal of getting his GCSAA certification. With a minimum of five years tenure as a superintendent required to qualify for certification, Puckett said he expects the next four years will teach him a lot.

As one who likes to build “family” into his work force Puckett said his crew has a “casual, comfortable, working relationship with quality work as our goal.”

Assistant Superintendent Alan Autry helps him lead workers that range in age from 18 to 71. The crew works hard and maintains a professional, friendly and courteous relationship with the club members but can also have fun while working together, Puckett said.

Puckett said he was first enchanted with his profession when he was only 14 and worked in the cart shop and began cutting grass at ImperiaLakes Country Club in Lakeland in 1974. He told his parents while in the 10th grade that this was the career he wanted. He set his sights on Lake City Community College and got there after finishing high school. He hasn’t regretted it yet.

He is accustomed to 60-hour work weeks — or more — and cares about doing quality work that reflects well on himself and his crew.

“I have fun doing this job every day and

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