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Tom Fazio

# Welcome to

*At the Hammock Dunes Links  
is the number-one concern.... a*

BY KIT BRADSHAW

There are cranes, alligators, snakes, egrets, otters, bobcats and deer — including 8 to 10-point bucks — flying, scampering, slinking and bounding across more than a hundred acres of multi-million-dollar oceanfront property in Palm Coast.

They establish territories, splash in lakes, make nests, and even cavort across bunkers and nibble on the carefully tended flowers.

David Portz doesn’t care. “This is Audubon heaven,” says Portz.

“You see birds and wildlife here all day long. The humans just learn to cohabitate with nature.”

You’d think the man whose responsibility it is to maintain this precious 100 acres called the Hammock Dunes Links Course would be more concerned when he sees his flowers become a snack for a passing deer. But he isn’t.

Portz revels in the challenge.

“I’m environmentally conscious of everything in nature. I’ve always wanted to give a lending hand to



# Audubon heaven!

*Course along the Atlantic Ocean, sensitivity to the environment and Superintendent Dave Portz likes it that way.*

the management of some area of God's good earth. And I don't think there is any surrounding more beautiful than a golf course," he says.

Tom Fazio's name may appear as the course designer but his "area of God's good earth" captures its character from the wind and the sea, the lowlands and the hammocks.

"From a design standpoint," says Fazio, "my number-one concern wasn't wetlands and the natural

areas, but the wind. You can't see or touch the wind... it doesn't belong to the terrain of the course, and yet the wind has a lot to do with how the holes were designed and how these holes are played.

"After that, the predominance of the ocean at the site and the sensitive areas of the course — hammocks of oak trees, the wetlands and the water quality issues and drainage of the site — became important factors in placing the golf course in the

ground," Fazio says. "I think the way the course fits into the natural terrain of the site is not new, but to me has become standard. We have learned a lot more about the environment recently."

"Fazio," says Portz, "created a golf course that is extremely sensitive to the environment, could qualify as a PGA Tour course, and yet is enjoyable for the average golfer."

Maintaining this natural beauty on a golf course has its own set of





Portz uses a light pen to program his irrigation system on a personal computer. Balancing the marketing requirement to keep the golf course green and lush against the state's increasing regulation of its dwindling water resources is the primary challenge of his job. A graduate of Penn State University, Portz has held several offices in the Central Pennsylvania GCSA and Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council. He hopes to become active in Florida organizations as time permits.

difficulties, according to golf course superintendent Portz.

"To the best of my knowledge, we have more restrictions than any other golf course in the state as far as pesticide usage and use of chemicals on sensitive areas are concerned.

"For instance, Orthene is approved because it is not a chemical that persists in the environment and yet it gives us the control we need. But we can't use Triumph on the greens because of its possible effects on the environment.

"This is a challenge," he adds, "but I've always advocated the advantages of good aerification, top dressing, maintaining good fertility levels and keeping a balanced soil to allow the environment to be as healthy as possible for good grass growth. If you have healthy turf, you have less chance for infestation."

The course has five types of grasses:

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fairways, Tifton 328 bermudagrass tees, zoysia around the sand bunkers and in waste bunkers, and St. Augustine in the roughs.

Portz says that his degree from Penn State and his 17 years at Brookside CC in Allentown, Pa., prepared him well for his duties at Hammock Dunes, where he began work in October.

"In this part of Florida, you have cool season grasses and warm season grasses, which is what we had in Pennsylvania. In the North, I think golf course superintendents get a little complacent because they can put their courses to bed part of the year and plan their vacations for the winter. I think growing grass in Florida is a lot of fun, even though it's a 365-day-a-year job. At least that's what I think now," he says. "Ask me again in five years."

Although the grasses may be similar, the type of golf course communities prevalent in the South and the North greatly.

"Much golf course development in Florida is community development, property development," says Portz. "And prop-



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Number two, as seen from a bridge.

erty management only understands one thing: green. There is a lot of pressure put on golf course superintendents to have a course that is green and lush and playable.

"But you can have a course that is less than lush and green and still have one that plays well. It's important that this information, this education, start at the management level and go up through the ranks. Golf course superintendents have to start convincing people that you don't have to put a lot of things on the course to make sure it is playable."

Portz realizes that Hammock Dunes is a marketable development, one that not only has a golf course and clubhouse, but one that has homesites as well. The golf course is part of the lifestyle at the Hammock Dunes community.

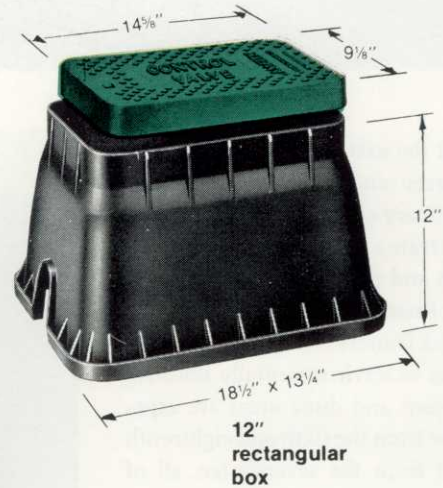
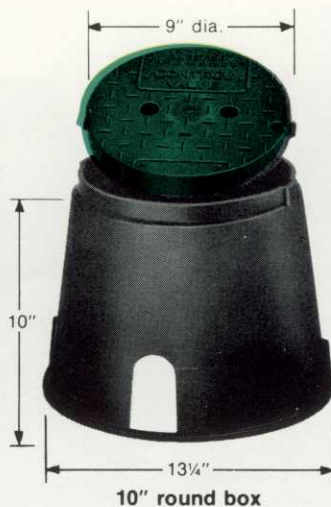
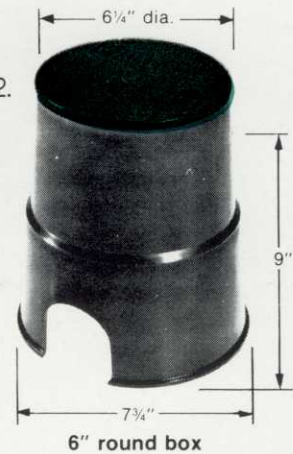
"I think the challenge here is to reduce pesticides and continuously monitor what you are doing with the course," Portz says. "It's a great opportunity to work and prove you can create good course conditions

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In creating the course, Fazio extended the dune line through the course to create dramatic ocean views and play. Portz says that the dune areas are left as natural as possible.

"If we have erosion, we come back in and plant and take care of weeds, but generally we leave the dune areas alone."

There are also hammocks which line the fairways and create a backdrop on the course. And there are the lowlands, lakes and marshes which provide habitat for much of the wildlife at the course.

Portz says he is using effluent for irrigation and therefore, his course doesn't fall under any drought restrictions.

"Effluent has to be returned to the aquifer in some way, shape or form," Portz says, "and using it to irrigate turf is one of the best ways to filter effluent into the aquifer."

Portz has a 22-man crew to help maintain the Links Course and the 10 to 15 acres of clubhouse grounds that contain formal gardens.

"I have an assistant, an irrigation technician, a spray technician and two mechanics, plus 16 other people who help us manage the course within our daily routines."

Portz says that Admiral Corp., a subsidiary of ITT Community Development Corp., is creating a residential community with "a great deal of environmental concern," much in the same way that the Links Course was created.

According to the developer's 20-year program, estate homes, villas and condo-



EVERHART/PHOTOGRAPHICS

without all the extras. There is a balance between green and lush and playability. And my primary objective as a superintendent is to create a course that is green and marketable and playable and still do this within our financial restrictions."

Hammock Dunes Links Course has three major areas of environmentally sensitive terrain. Ocean and dune areas are especially visible from the sixth and eighteenth greens and from the seventh tee, all of which are elevated along the ocean.

*Entrance to maintenance complex could pass for a residential area.*





*Stiff breeze over the dunes holds up the flag against a gray sky, lending the feeling of a true linksland course.*

miniums are planned for the community. However, conservation of the wetlands, creation of lakes and marshes, protection and restoration of the dunes and preservation of the 250-acre oak hammock and an Indian mound archeological site are also part of the overall plan. Information from the developer says that more than 50 percent of the 2,250-acre property will remain open as recreation, conservation, service and preservation areas.

Portz's main concern, however, remains

the Links Course. It has taken up so much of his time since his arrival that he hasn't had the opportunity to become active in professional organizations.

He is a member of the North Florida GCSA, the FTGA, the GCSAA and still maintains a membership in the Central Pennsylvania GCSA and Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council.

"When I was in Pennsylvania, I was president of the Central Pennsylvania organization and served as director for six

years," he says. "At this point, I'm still learning about the profession in Florida, and I haven't had time to become as active as I was up north. But I know that eventually, as time permits, I'll become active here as well.

"Right now, this relocation has been an enlightening and very enjoyable experience. Hammock Dunes Links Course has a lot of advantages for a golf course superintendent. It has great design, a good foundation and it was built well."