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It's that time of year when the center of the golf universe can be found in the rolling hills of northeast Georgia. A time when the legends of the links, the wedge wizards and putter princes meet on the emerald fairways of Augusta National to do battle for the Masters championship.

Who among us golfing mortals has not wished that our humble courses could abound

in such splendor as seen in the majestically manicured turf amid the spectacular backdrop of blazing color provided by the blooming azaleas, camellias, dogwoods, and wisteria.

While pictures on television tantalize and tempt

our senses, only a visit to the grounds can give you a full appreciation and understanding of what it takes to produce such a display of perfection.

I have made three visits to the Masters Tournament using the privilege of free admission accorded to Class A Golf Course Superintendent members of the GCSAA. Often heralded as the toughest ticket in sports, the general public is admitted first-come first-served for the practices rounds for a nominal \$10 fee. There is a daily limit, and they do sell out, even for the practice rounds. If you're a golf course superintendent, you should really plan to visit for at least one day and see the operation first hand.

And just what will you see?

Well, I don't want to give away the magician's secrets, but I think it's fair to reveal that the picture perfect stripes and checkerboard mowing patterns aren't done with smoke and mirrors. They are accomplished

by an army of volunteers consisting of area superintendents and turf industry suppliers. We have played a few rounds of golf at nearby courses during our Masters pilgrimages, and we never get to meet the superintendents because they are over at Augusta National mowing Amen Corner and having a ball being part of the greatest show in golf! How would you like to have a crew like that?

It is mind boggling to watch the convoys of triplex and five-gang mowers proceeding up and down the fairways and roughs like precision flying units. The mowers are then followed by squads of draggers, whippers, and sweepers who scatter every visible grass clipping. Combine this array of equipment and manpower with a couple of Boy Scout troops with trash bags and it's little wonder the place is immaculate. Of course, anyone who visits Augusta National is so impressed with the reasonable prices and flawless operation that to litter would be heresy.

When contemplating the perfection of Augusta National's condition and wondering why your course can't look like that, it is important to remember that they are closed from the first of June until October. All project work is done at that time and the course doesn't have to be kept in top playing condition. How many times do you try to do projects and keep the course open at the same time? Budgets don't seem to be a problem either. With a national membership, and healthy revenues generated by the tournament, funds are available to maintain the tradition of excellence.

Speaking of tradition, it doesn't take long to feel the ambience and history of the Masters as you walk around the course trodding in the paths blazed by Sarazen, Nelson, Hogan, Palmer, and Nicklaus.

And you can't really appreciate how much elevation change there is from the clubhouse down to Amen Corner until you've made the climb in person.

I invite you to come to Augusta National and feel the magic. Experience the beauty. Savor the inspiration. Dispel the myths. Be a part of the history.

The Masters: the Magic and the Myths

Green Side Up



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