

# Billy Wright: A Man of Many Talents

BY DAVID COURT, CGCSA

It was back in 1978 when the South Florida Chapter of the FGCSA consisted of six counties: Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River. At that time it was decided by several key people that the association was too large and needed to be divided into smaller groups. Out of this came a new association called Tri-County GCSA, and one year later divided again into what is now the Palm Beach GCSA.

Leading this change of action were superintendents Bob Strait, George Cavanaugh, Otto Schmeisser, Carl Smith, Carl McKinney, Bill Kriegal and Billy Wright. Billy, a member of the founding board of directors, started out as the treasurer and in the second year of its existence became president of the newly-formed association.

Billy has been in the golf business for some time now. In fact, he was mowing greens for summer work at the Peachtree Golf Club before many of our current superintendents were born. His career was interrupted by Uncle Sam in 1967. For two years he served as staff sergeant in the First Infantry Division Rifle Company. While in Vietnam he earned the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantry Badge, and the Air Medal. Perhaps this is where he developed his expertise in bunker construction.

Back in the states, the native Georgian came to work as the superintendent of Arvida's Boca West Country Club, where he constructed and maintained the first two courses. In 1973 Billy headed a few miles north to Delray Beach, where he supervised the construction and maintenance of Villa Del Ray Golf Club. In 1980, it was back to the now Arvida/Disney Corporation at the Boca West Club, this time as the Director of Golf Courses and Landscape Operations. From 1981 to 1985, Boca West was the site of the nationally-televised Chrysler Team Championship, a PGA event.

With the membership purchase of the club, Billy has remained at Boca West. He has taken the courses to their best condition ever. As we know, great leaders have great people working under them,

## President's Award Winners: 1995

Mike Barger  
Paul Frank  
Billy Wright

and Billy is no exception. Karen Mital has been his secretary for ten years. Augie Montes, the head mechanic, has been in his position for fifteen years, while Don Kirk has served Billy since 1970 initially as the landscape superintendent and now as shop foreman. Each of the four courses at Boca West has its own superintendent.

*In the event he should ever want to leave the turf business, Billy has other interests. Billy can also sell real estate, pilot a single-engine aircraft and captain 100-ton vessels — and he has the licenses to prove it*

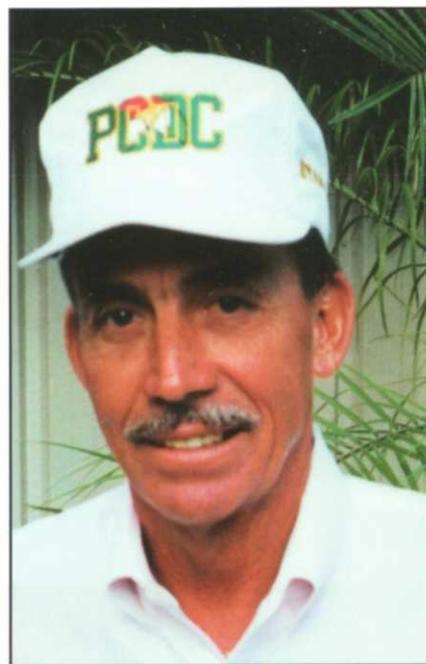
Scott Spara, Paul Housewright, Bill Henderson and Andy Lemmel make up the four who give the courses their individual attention.

Over the years, Billy has had several members of his staff go on to improve their careers and become quite successful. Mark Sigfried took a position with Lesco, Steve LaFrance is the superintendent at Jacksonville's Marsh Landing Golf Club and Randy Waldron is the superintendent at the Golf Club of Georgia, outside of Atlanta.

Construction has been the challenge at Boca West over the past eight years. They have regrassed greens on all four courses, dug lakes, lengthened holes, and completed other similar projects which

the large membership demands. Next year's project will be the reconstruction of the entire #1 course. The club is currently under a \$24 million facelift — at that price you get the whole body, too.

In the event he should ever want to leave the turf business, Billy has other interests. Billy can also sell real estate, pilot a single-engine aircraft and captain 100-ton vessels — and he has the licenses to prove it! I don't know where he found the time to do all this, but I do know that it makes all kinds of careers possible for Billy. Perhaps he could sell intercoastal real estate while being a captain on the water taxi!



Billy Wright

Billy doesn't usually take lunch breaks; instead, he runs to keep in good physical shape. His other pastime is fishing on his boat, aptly named "Shin Splints." Maybe running has taken its toll after all.

Billy is a special person to all of us here in Palm Beach County, as well as to his many friends throughout Florida, Georgia and Alabama. All the people I contacted for this article have only great admiration and respect for him. Congratulations, Billy, on being a recipient of the President's Award. You deservedly join a fine group of individuals who have received this recognition.

# Mark Jarrell receives Wreath Of Grass Award

BY DAVID BAILEY

The Florida Turfgrass Association awarded the 1995 "Wreath of Grass" to Mark Jarrell at the annual FTGA meeting last October in Tampa, Florida. The Wreath of Grass is the FTGA's highest honor.

Mark is affiliated with the Palm Beach National Golf Club in Lake Worth. A graduate of the University of Florida in 1973, Mark is one of the last students to study turfgrass management under the legendary Dr. G. C. Horn. Mark is one of the avid Gator alumni that has enjoyed success this fall on and off the football field.

Mark has been an FTGA member and office holder for over twenty years. He is a past president of both the Palm Beach GCSA and the Florida GCSA. He has served on numerous IFAS and local county agricultural councils. Mark has been our journalism representative for GOLF WEEK magazine for nearly ten years. He currently serves as assistant editor for The Florida Green magazine.

Mark has now received both of the highest honors in the state from his profession. He received the Florida GCSA "Distinguished Service Award" in 1988.

One of Mark's closest friends and fellow superintendents said it best, "Mark is the ultimate behind the scenes leader. When any group needs a worker, Mark is there. We have all benefited from his countless hours of work and dedication. Every golfer in the state owes him a thank you."

Mark Jarrell leaves big footsteps for others to follow.



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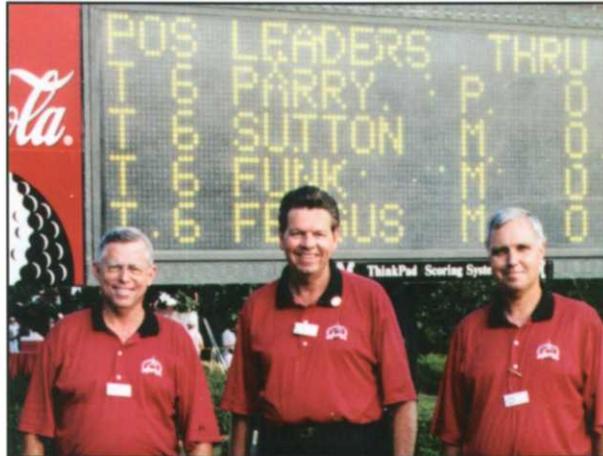
# Two autumn events conclude Florida Tour

As the days dwindle down to a precious few for the 1995 Golf Season, we have two more tournaments to highlight to complete our Florida Tour. We have seen some new faces and some old friends as we followed the PGA, LPGA and Sr. PGA tours across the state from January to December. Now its time to finish the journey.

## The Walt Disney World-Oldsmobile Classic

by Joel Jackson, CGCS

The Walt Disney World-Oldsmobile Classic is rated as having one of the best Pro-Am packages in golf. The Classic Club amateurs get to play with three different tour players on three different courses. There are parties and banquets;



Larry Kamphaus, CGCS, Manager of Walt Disney World Golf Course Maintenance, is a 25-event veteran of the Disney-Oldsmobile Classic. He is flanked by Bob Karnes, right, superintendent of the Palm Course, and Joel Jackson, CGCS, of the Magnolia and Oak Trail courses.

park admissions; courtesy car service; reduced green fees all year; seasonal

## The Florida Tour Part 3 - FALL

Disney Oldsmobile  
Classic  
JCPenney Classic

tournaments; and tee gifts. This year was a milestone for the tournament. It was the 25th anniversary of the event. Head superintendent, Larry Kamphaus, has been there for all of them. His name was flashed on the electronic scoreboard daily with a few others to honor their participation.

The format for the event utilizes three courses. This year the three original Joe Lee courses, Lake Buena Vista, Mag-



Magnolia, Oak Trail and Palm crew members meet on Palm #16 to take a bow for a great job well done during the Classic.

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nolia and Palm, were selected to celebrate the silver anniversary event. Lake Buena Vista had dropped out of the rotation recently because of renovation projects to the greens and the irrigation system.

Television coverage was provided by the two-year old Golf Channel network. The major networks had abandoned coverage of this Fall event in favor of college football and the World Series which challenged the market for viewers at this time of year. The Golf Channel folks were great to work with during set up and the broadcast. The only problem they had was the same one we had, the weather!

Our tournament operation and schedule is planned around a two week event. We host the Oldsmobile Scramble National Finals the week before the Classic. The Scramble format calls for the finalists to play the last round with a tour player and so the incoming pros are tapped on Monday of Classic week to participate. Of course it means we have to maintain tournament conditions for two weeks instead of just one.

We split our staff into morning and evening shifts with most still working in the mornings. Both tournaments run a 1 and 10 start daily. We do the usual routines in the mornings: rake bunkers; mow tees and collars; mow greens; set cups and drag dew. In the afternoons and evenings, we mow and blow the fairways and the practice range, the walkways and fairway collars. Every spare moment is spent filling tee and fairway divots either after play or before play. This year would be different!

Because of the record rainfall during the summer, we were lucky to catch a brief lull in the weather in early September to whip the courses into shape. Everyone was feeling good about the conditions. Then the bottom fell out. With the Oldsmobile Scramble only a few hours into its first round, we received a two inch downpour. The round was canceled and from then on we were working around 7:00 am shotgun starts as players had to finished rained-out rounds and then travel to the next course and try to get in the next round. Cart path only conditions prevailed slowing play down.

The rains slacked a bit and they finished their contest. We had endured 4 inches of rain during Scramble week as we tried to maintain tournament conditions for the upcoming Classic. Working with a three day rain break we touched things up for the Classic. Our luck didn't hold. We had another two inches of rain during the Classic scattered over the event causing the officials to shorten the event to 54 holes. They played lift, clean and place rules the entire week. We couldn't even mow the fairways after Wednesday. The ground was so saturated the players were leaving 1/2 to 3/4 inch deep footprints in the turf.

It was disheartening and frustrating to say the least: a feeling we all have shared this stormy season. There were a few silver linings though. The Bonnet Creek courses sent over extra people to help with the course prep each morning as we labored to pump out bunkers, repair washouts and hand-drag the dew ahead of play. I also give credit to those tour players who took the time to stop members of our crew to thank them for their efforts. Most notable were Tom

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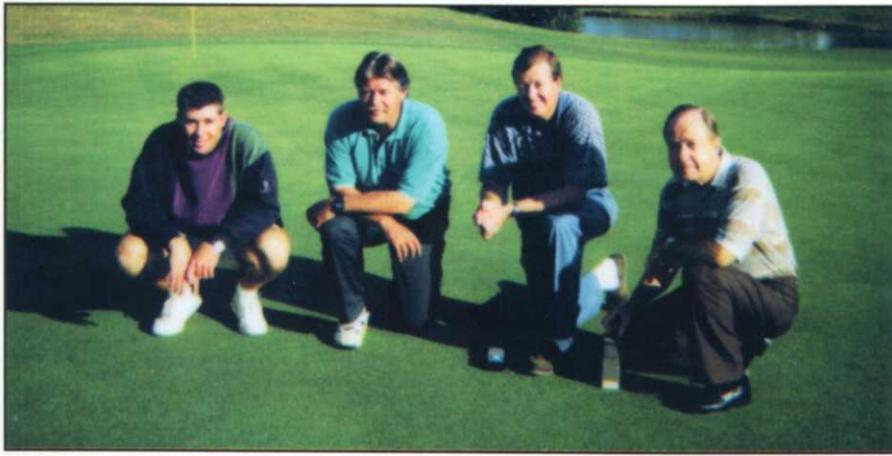
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From left, Bill Grosser, Vern Easter, Greg Osborne and Arlin Grant of Innisbrook Resort.



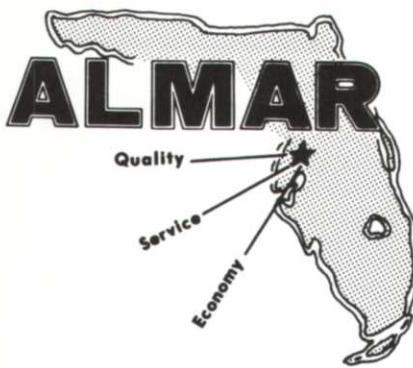
Kite, Phil Blackmar and Mike Hulbert. To a man they commented about what a shame it had to rain so much because they could see past the puddles and tell we had the turf in good condition from the few times they played without rain.

On the last day with storm clouds building by the minute, Brad Bryant completed his own Cinderella story by earning his first PGA victory over Hal Sutton and Ted Tryba.

Within 15 minutes, another rain event began that launched a six inch deluge making tournament tear down over the next week just as brutal as the set up and

Superintendent Doug Rouse (front row left) and the Lake Buena Vista crew will have hosted the Disney-Oldsmobile Classic, a U.S. Women's Amateur Qualifying tournament and the LPGA HealthSouth inaugural between October and January. Anybody want to trade schedules?

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operation had been.

The skies have cleared. The courses are drying out. The damage has been repaired. Our overseeding is down. Time for all of us to move on and get ready for next year's Florida Tour.

**J. C. Penney Classic**

*by J. Arlin Grant, CGCS*

Every fall members of the LPGA and PGA Tours team up to play the J. C. Penney Classic. The past six years Innisbrook has hosted the event on the Copperhead Golf Course. During the week of the event (November 27 to December 3), forty-three employees along with Golf Course Director, Greg Osborne, and supervisors, William Grosser and Vernon Easter, worked a split shift, 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

We had 13.5 inches of rain in October, which hampered our October overseeding plans. We managed to get the seed out on October 23rd and 24th. The greens were overseeded with a two-to-one blend of Sabre and Pro-Am Poa trivialis at a rate of 14 pounds per 1,000

square feet. Our Tifway 419 tees were seeded with Resort perennial ryegrass at a rate of 25 pounds per 1,000 square feet, and our green's collars were seeded at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet with a blend of Commander (50%), Assure (30%) and Legacy (20%) ryegrasses. The driving range was also seeded with the Resort blend at 25 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

Our mowing program was designed to achieve a green speed of 10.0 to 10.5 feet on the stimpmeter. It was necessary to cut some greens four or five times to get the desired result. We used walk mowers set at .125. We mowed our tees with triplexes and fairways with 5-gang mowers daily at .5 inch. the driving range was also mowed daily with triplexes. The roughs were mowed as needed only with either 5-gang units or 3-gang trim mowers. Our cultural practices of grooming, verticutting, fertilizing and topdressing were done up to tournament week.

We hand raked the bunkers every day. All bunkers were tamped with a power tamper to prevent any buried lies. Each day we also filled fairway divots with a charcoal sand mix. Divots on tees

were filled with a green sand mixture. Cups and tee markers were changed under the supervision of the LPGA and PGA officials.

One week prior to the tournament the entire course was roped for gallery control. Bleachers were put up at the 9th, 14th, 17th and 18th greens. Electronic scoreboards were installed at various locations around the course. TV camera crews and technicians laid miles of cable two days before the tournament. The event was broadcasted on ESPN on Friday and Saturday (December 1st and 2nd), and on ABC on Sunday, December 3rd.

We had .5 inches of rain on Wednesday and then perfect weather the rest of the event. the temperatures were in the mid 50's at night and low 80's during the day. In fact, our only concern during the event was a raccoon on the 7th tee that would come up to the players and beg for food.

The team of Beth Daniel and Davis Love combined their talents for a score of 27 under (257) to win the tournament.

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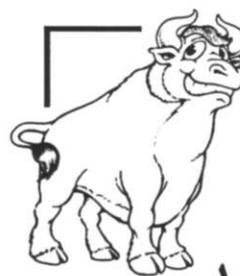
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