

(Re)build it and they will come

There are several reasons to rebuild or remodel a golf course or portions of it.

Probably the number-one reason is to restore the integrity and playability of the golf course.

Wear and tear by man, machine and the elements take a toll on the turf and the infrastructure like drainage, irrigation and cart paths. All of these processes disfigure the course from its original design.

Advancements in the game itself of-

ten challenge the owners or members of a course to reroute holes, add or eliminate bunkers, add tees, plant trees or just make overall improvements to the facility to make it attractive to new members and remain competitive in the marketplace.

If your club is thinking of rebuilding or remodeling your course, the American Society of Golf Course Architects has several free brochures that may be of some help in your planning: *Selecting Your Golf Course Architect*; *Remodeling Your Golf Course* and *Golf Course Devel-*

opment Planning Guide. These brochures may be obtained by writing or calling the ASGCA at 221 LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 6061; (312) 372-7090.

The Golf Course Builders Association of America also has valuable information in its cost and estimating guide. Contact the GCBAA at 920 Airport Rd. #230, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; (919) 942-8922.

Finally, the National Golf Foundation has several useful publications. Contact the NGF at 1150 S. U.S. One, Jupiter, FL 34477; (561) 744-6006.

The Forest Country Club: Starting over from scratch

BY BILL KILPATRICK

Freelance Writer

It isn't often a decision is made to tear up an existing golf course and start over again more or less from scratch.

But that's what the board of directors of Fort Myers' The Forest Country Club decided to do with the 36-hole golf course community's Bobcat course, the result being that as of May 5 of this year it was shut down for what was billed as "an extensive \$1.5 million renovation."

The line between completely rebuilding a golf course and renovating it can be pretty thin, and in the case of The Forest, the Bobcat project is right on the razor's edge. Just about everywhere you look you see and hear the roar of bulldozers and graders, see and hear the ponderous clanking of massive mechanical shovels, see and hear the crunch of ditch-digging backhoes.

"This is the first major overhaul the course has received since it was built over 10 years ago," said The Forest superintendent Rick Tatum, the man ramrodding the project. "We're leaving Nos. 10 through 13 pretty much as is except for enlarging the greens, but the rest of the course is being extensively worked over."

When completed, the revised Bobcat



Going up — When completed, rebuilding project at The Forest will have used 42,000 cubic yards of fill to raise the level of 10 of the Bobcat course fairways, some by as much as 2 feet as shown here on No. 2. Photo by Bill Kilpatrick.



Big noise — The roar, thump and clank of heavy construction equipment has been a summer-long constant on The Forest's rebuilt Bobcat course. Looking back toward the tee, the fairway on No. 16 has been recontoured, its drainage improved. Photo by Bill Kilpatrick.

will feature bigger greens, some of which have been enlarged as much as 50 percent. In addition to being bigger, they'll be somewhat unique.

"USGA specs for a green call for a four-inch layer of gravel," said Tatum, "but we've eliminated the gravel to facilitate percolation of water down through the soil.

"The purpose of the gravel is to enable a green to hold water, but when you're in a geographic area that gets 100 inches of rain a year, holding water isn't exactly something you have to worry about. If you allow the water to be held you risk algae problems, especially in shady areas. Besides, with our sprinkler setup any of our greens can get all the water they need."

Tatum added that doing away with gravel and thus facilitating percolation of water also helps get rid of salt in a soil profile.

Also certain to be noticed on the revised Bobcat will be enlarged and leveled tees.

"The tees will be pointing down the fairways, too," said Tatum, adding that with the Bobcat course such wasn't always the case.

Although some fairways and greens are being recontoured, the changes implemented by Sarasota golf course designer Chip Powell and Clearwater contractor MGI, Inc. are subtle as opposed to dramatic. For example, golfers familiar with the Bobcat of the past will notice that on some greens putts that once curved right will instead curve left. Otherwise, the course will play pretty much as it always has.

But if it's drama you crave, consider that the levels of 10 fairways are being raised to improve drainage, an undertaking that required moving 42,000 cubic yards of fill. The fill was extracted from what will — when the project is completed — be seven acres of lakes, some of them new, some extensions of existing lakes.

One of the most dramatic features of the project overall is raising the level of No. 2 fairway by two feet.

"That fairway's always been a problem," said Tatum. "During the rainy season it often was under water, or if not under water then too soggy for a golf cart to drive over. It was a pain to mow, too."

He said that when all the new drainage

is in place and all grading is completed, the fairways and tees would be planted in GN-1, so-called Norman grass. The greens will be planted in Floradwarf.

"We've given the Floradwarf a thorough test and like the way it performs," said Tatum. "It's resilient, has a high density, and can be mowed to a lower height, as low as 1/10th-of-an-inch. In fact, mowed to that height it has greater density than Tifdwarf mowed to 1/4-inch. They claim it has density comparable to bentgrass, and in every test we've conducted here at The Forest, the claim seems to be right on the money."

Tatum is more than enthusiastic about the potential of the new ultradwarf grasses, and says it's only a matter of time until all South Florida greens are planted in one of the new varieties.

"They grow in faster and they mature faster," he said. "In fact, they could be the best thing that has happened to courses down here in 30 years."

Southwest Florida being where and what it is, Tatum's admittedly overriding concern throughout has been the weather; considering the extent of the work being done, the region's rainy season isn't exactly conducive to the rebuilding of an entire golf course.

"Our target date to open is November 1," said Tatum. "Right now we're about halfway. But if we get a few breaks from the weather, we should be right on schedule."

Rebuilding projects done in-house

BY JOE ONDO, CGCS

Winter Pines Golf Club

Greens

The decision to rebuild our worst greens was based on several factors:

(1) Some of the greens with Tifgreen 328 surfaces were acceptable when

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overseeded, but not in the spring and summer months.

(2) Our play in the summer months was increasing and we wanted to give our players better greens all year round.

(3) The drainage was poor due to the underlying muck soil and low spots developed as the muck settled.

(4) We could not keep consistent ball roll between the Tifgreen 328 and Tifdwarf greens.

We felt that we had nine greens that needed to be improved. Six had "328" surfaces and three were already Tifdwarf, but needed help.

Since we are a public golf course, we decided we would only do one green a year to minimize the impact to our players. We have completed eight greens so far with only one of the "328" greens to go.

After deciding which green we would do first, a temporary green was cut-in and trained on a high and dry spot in the fairway. We made it about 2,500 square feet because we figured we would be using it about three months. The players didn't seem to mind playing one temporary green when they saw the changes we were making to improve the hole.

The only additional equipment we needed for the project was a trencher for the drain lines. We did rent a small dump truck to use on a couple of greens, but our bridges wouldn't handle the weight so we did the bulk of our hauling of greens mix and gravel with our two trucksters, a Jacobsen T-2000 and a EZ-Go GXT 1500 with dump beds. They could haul about 1/3 of a yard at a time. We were able to place some of the materials on nearby empty lots, but it still was a lot of hauling.

The old putting surface sod was cut, stripped and hauled away. Then we trenched in a herringbone pattern drain field with a "smile" drain along the front edge of the putting surface. On the muck-based greens we used choker sand to help drainage and stabilize low areas in the profile. Most greens were already too low so none were cored out. Rather, we built them up and added fill to tie into the slope contour and sodded the banks.

Some of the greens were kept about the same size, but if we felt it too small, we

added mix to make more pin locations. The shaping was done by myself and the crew with a tractor and box blade attachment. Then we went over it with a sand pro till we were satisfied with the look.

Sprinklers were moved if necessary and the soil was watered and packed. Fumigation was done by an outside contractor and the plastic tarp removed a few days later. Then each green was sprigged with Tifdwarf at the rate of 30 bushels per thousand square feet. We grew them in for at least eight weeks unless weather or timing pushed back our opening date.

The problem with doing one green a year was there was no guarantee we would get the same Tifdwarf the next year, but it was an improvement over what we had. Some mutation and contamination has occurred and we have tried to plug some of it out and stay ahead of it as best we can.

For the most part, the crew enjoyed the challenge of the project while still maintaining the golf course for play. Some of the flymow and edging work got put on hold for a little longer than we would have liked, but overall the golf course was kept maintained pretty well.

Tees

The rebuilding of our tee tops has been another continuing project. Some of the tees built in 1968 had become "crowned" from top dressing over the years. They were also too small to handle the wear from our steadily increasing play.

The areas around the tees to be improved were shot with a transit to see how large we could make them. The sod was stripped and stacked nearby to be replaced after we finished the alterations. We used the tractor with box blade to level, widen and extend each tee as needed. We packed the soil and shot it again with the transit to make sure it was level. Then we replaced the sod, rolled it, top dressed it and opened it for play.

Drainage

During the wet summer we had two or three years ago, some of other pushed-up greens that had no drainage began to have problems. We decided to solve the

problem by installing a drain field without rebuilding the entire green. Again, we cut a temporary green but this time only for a day. We cut a herringbone pattern on the green with a sod cutter and saved the sod. Then we brought in plywood to lay along the sod cuts for the rented trencher to ride on.

The plywood made cleaning up the dirt easier and protected the green from being rutted. The pipe and gravel were installed in the trenches and the top of the drain field was kept at least 8 inches below the surface so they wouldn't interfere with future cup setting. An air vent was installed in the drainpipe where it extended into the collar to aid in better drainage flow. Greensmix was used to fill top 8 inches of the trenches and watered and packed. The sod was laid back down as it had come out and then packed.

The green was back open as soon as we were done that day. Some settling did occur, and those areas were hand topdressed as needed. We have done five greens this way so far.

Whether rebuilding greens, tees or adding drainage, everything we do helps make Winter Pines a little better golf course for everyone to play and enjoy.

Pine Tree Golf Club **The Restoration of a Dick Wilson Classic**

In 1961 Dick Wilson created a great masterpiece, the Pine Tree Golf Club, in Boynton Beach. The course quickly gained a national reputation by being honored in the Top Ten of Golf Digest's top 100 courses in the country. The course, virtually untouched since 1961, has consistently held that honor.

This summer, architect Ron Forse, who recently successfully restored Indian Creek in Miami, will bring back Wilson's design at Pine Tree. Working from photos commissioned by Ben Hogan, greens that have risen two feet from 36 years of top dressing will be lowered and enlarged to the original specifications.

The goal is to have a rebirth of the superb layout crafted by Wilson in 1961.

Hogan's desire to have photos made of every tee shot and approach shot on the course is a testament to the caliber of course Wilson designed. Hogan reportedly called it "one of the finest courses in the world."

Arnold Palmer and Dow Finsterwald applied for conventional memberships to the club after playing it. Wilson was also the original designer of the Bay Hill Club in Orlando.

Forse of Forse Design, Inc. of Hopwood, Pa. is an avid restorationist. He even teaches a GCSAA course on classic courses and master architects. His reputation for attention to detail was a key factor in his selection for the project.

Forse says, "The beauty of what Wilson created and still remains, is very rare. This course and the photo documentation should remain as a historical monument to one of golf's greatest architects."

Bulldozers, backhoes, front end loaders and four dump trucks with turf tires have been rebuilding the greens, bun-

kers and lakes with amazing delicacy and minimal sound. Under the intense study of Forse, it is obvious that the intent of all concerned is to pull off something historic and spectacular. Construction has been moving along at a good pace and the reopening is tentatively planned for Nov. 1.

From bentgrass to bermuda and beyond

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

In the mid 1980s, the Isleworth Country Club in Windermere was one a few courses in Florida built with pure bentgrass greens. The others were Golden Eagle in Tallahassee, The Plantation at Ponte Vedra in Ponte Vedra Beach, and Loxahatchee in Jupiter. As of last year, all of those courses have converted to Tifdwarf bermudagrass greens except the Plantation course, which still doggedly pursues the holy grail.

Since I had the challenge of managing Isleworth's greens from 1988 to 1991 during the bentgrass years, I was interested in finding out from superintendent Buck Buckner exactly how the conversion took place, and what other changes the club had made. Buckner, who already had a great reputation for his good greens at the nearby Orange Tree C. C., came on board in 1993 to oversee the conversion.

"The first decision — to replace the bentgrass and rebuild the greens to USGA specifications — was a no brainer," said Buckner. "Having bentgrass in Central Florida is a wonderful dream, but just isn't realistic! As you experienced it, Joel, you could have great bentgrass for six to eight months depending on the weather.

"When it got warm and humid, it could get ugly. The club wanted to make sure we had the best possible playing surfaces all year round, so switching to Tifdwarf was the obvious choice."

"The second decision was harder. Af-



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Isleworth's 12th green: rebuilt and regrassed. Photo by Buck Buckner.

ter we got into coring out the greens and rebuilding them, the members began talking about playability issues and the challenge of the course. The course had always been wide open and player friendly.

"Everyone was looking for a little more challenge.

"So we decided to hire golf course architect, Steve Smyers, to look into what could be done to complement the original layout and instill a little more challenge and excitement. So the relatively simple concept of converting the greens turned into a multi-year phased program of improvements and change."

"Isleworth's vision of challenge included good bunkering. Smyers reworked the existing 26 bunkers and added 64 more for a total of 90. I think he did a good job with them," said Buck.

I had to agree. As Buck and I rode the remodeled course, I had a hard time remembering whether some of bunkers were original or new because they seemed very natural in the rolling layout.

Buck added, "In addition to the bunkers, the greens were all reshaped and #17 and #18 were relocated. The 18th hole was shortened into a challenging par 4 and the 17th lengthened into a gambling, go-for-it-in-two, par 5.

"The high left side of the 7th hole was cut and lowered and we used the fill to

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wonderful dream, but
just isn't realistic!***

raise the low areas on the 3rd hole. We also moved tees and built new tees to give more variety for playing length and different sight lines.

"Additionally, we have planted a lot of magnolias, maples, oaks and sweet gum to help define some areas and screen others. If you remember that Brazilian silk floss tree on #13, we harvested two seed pods and have planted many of the resulting seedlings around the course."

"The only real difficulty we had during the project was the record rainfall in the summers of 1993 and 1994. It forced us to do more sodding on areas we might otherwise have sprigged.

"All of the changes have been good, and the members seem pleased with the results. The course is still very playable for golfers of all caliber. I think the new changes may have toughened up the course by a stroke or two overall, but I think they're having more fun and excitement each round with the new looks and challenges."

Super Tips

Cleaning up fairway clippings presents challenge

BY DARREN J. DAVIS

*Golf Course Superintendent
Olde Florida Golf Club*

As a golf professional friend of mine often says, "There are many ways to make par." This philosophy certainly holds true in a golf course superintendent's line of work as well. Every superintendent has their own unique way of doing things and often the same task can be completed many different ways.

It is because of this that I believe one of the best methods for a golf course superintendent to advance his knowledge in the field of turfgrass management is through networking with his peers. It is this interaction among comrades that allow us to pick up on little tips or even completely different styles of management that will help us to a better job on our own "turf".

Beginning with this issue, a new feature in the *Florida Green* will be the "Super Tips" section. The "Super Tips" section will provide tips from your peers that might make your job easier or more efficient.

The first "Super Tip" relates to the clean up of "fairway clippings".

One of the challenges golf course superintendents face today is how to mow the large acreage of fairways with little or no distraction to the golfer. Some have chosen to mow the fairways in the afternoon. Mowing when the turf is dry usually solves the problem of the piles of clippings in the fairways.

However, not many golf course superintendent's have this luxury since it would probably be a hindrance or distraction to the golf play. Therefore, we are usually forced to mow fairways in the early morning hours.

Consequently for southern golf course superintendents, who mow fairways without baskets, mowing in the morning re-

If you have an innovative idea that you feel could help your fellow golf course superintendent, please drop us a line.



sults in numerous piles of clippings that must be dispersed.

Clippings in the fairways can obviously be a distraction. So what is the answer?

On a recent trip to Dancing Rabbit Golf Club in Philadelphia, Miss., I witnessed a unique solution.

Golf Course Superintendent John Mills had attached a fairway drag net, usually seen attached to the rear of a fairway mower, to a golf course utility vehicle. This allowed the fairway mower the freedom to do his job of mowing fairways without the concern of the location of a net attached to the rear of his fairway cutting machine.

By attaching the net to the bed of a utility vehicle, the employee dragging clippings can drive on only the close-cut fairway area.

Having the drag mat attached to a separate unit (utility vehicle) has several advantages:

- First, it takes only one vehicle and one operator. Therefore, there is not a need to send two vehicles and two operators on the golf course with a chain or hose dragged between them, knocking down the piles of clippings. This certainly saves labor dollars.
- Second, the net displaces all of the clippings with one pass over the area and it does so without dragging the net through the rough that often causes un-



This one-man drag mat mounted on a utility cart drags only in the fairways and doesn't require a second person, like a hose, rope or chain. Photos by Darren Davis.

sightly standing up of bermudagrass grain.

- Having the net attached to a utility vehicle also gives the golf course superintendent the freedom of dragging the fairways without necessarily having to cut the turfgrass. This may come in handy on a tournament day when mowing is not an option or if you desired to remove the dew on the fairways prior to fertilizing them.

- Having clipping dispersal as a separate job function also gives the fairway mower the freedom to mow fairways without the concern of the location of the net that normally would be dragging behind his unit.

- Finally, the utility vehicle method allows the net to be folded up and stored in the bed of a utility vehicle in-between dragging of golf holes.

The particular brand of fairway drag system seen at Dancing Rabbit Golf Club, is manufactured by Gold Medal Recreation Products, and is being distributed in Florida by Precision Small Engine in Pompano Beach.

If you have an innovative idea that you feel could help your fellow golf course superintendent please drop us a line at *The Florida Green*, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando, FL 32819, or email us at FLGRN@aol.com.