

In House Projects

Building One Project at a Time

By Joe Ondo, CGCS



Winter Pines has been selectively rebuilding the old push-up greens over the years to improve drainage and performance and to replace contaminated putting surfaces. Photo by Joel Jackson.



New 7-foot wide concrete paths replace and re-route the old asphalt paths. The crew often led by the owner Ed McMillin pours the new path in 110-foot long sections, which equals one truck load of concrete. Photo by Joel Jackson.

When I first started at Winter Pines in April 1979, the owners had just built five new holes. They installed new irrigation on those holes and on parts of the other four holes on the front nine. The rest of the course had some automatic controls on greens and tees and all quick couplers in the fairways.

When the new owner bought the course, the decision was made to add automatic irrigation to one or two holes at a time to keep the course open and minimize disruption to play. We basically duplicated what had been done on the other holes. All the work was conducted during normal play and by our own crew.

The city of Winter Park built a new water treatment plant in 1983 and offered the effluent water to us in 1984. They also offered to help pay to finish the last hole and the driving range so they could use the course to dispose of the treated water. We had our old well capped and sold our pump and have been using the effluent ever since.

This project allowed us to install lots of isolation valves and group our sprinkler heads to run

together either on high mounds or low areas needing less watering time. We installed Griswold valves and controls and they have worked well managing the effluent water.

Besides the irrigation system upgrade, we also engaged in a long-term greens-rebuilding program. All of the greens were native soil, push-up construction with no internal drainage. Some we could fix by installing drainage, but some of the

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One of eight new bridges installed by the Winter Pines staff. Photo by Joel Jackson.



The project to lower a high bunker lip was a snap compared to some of the long-range, in-house projects accomplished at Winter Pines. Photo by Joel Jackson.

greens also suffered from some of the typical off-type contamination/mutation prevalent in that era and some gave us problems at different times of the year.

Some we fixed by re-sodding, but we knew that was just a short-term solution.

We decided to hire someone to help us rebuild a green – still using our own crew. After doing one and seeing the results, we decided to continue doing one green a year. We'd mow a temporary green in the fairway for our players, and then strip the old sod off the green, add drainage haul in some good greens mix, do a rough shaping, have it fumigated, pack it and then plant sprigs and grow it in.

This system worked well but it took 9-10 weeks before we could reopen the green. We are a public course and most of the players didn't mind because they could see we were making improvements to the course.

After doing five greens this way, we heard about Rapid Turf and decided to give it a try. Everything was prepared just about the same way as before, and then the Rapid Turf folks brought in and installed the 50-foot-long by 4-foot-wide rolls of Tifdwarf sod. It was unrolled, packed and top-dressed. Even if it wasn't fully rooted down, the green was useable in three weeks. It was better than putting on a temporary green for another seven weeks. We made the green's size approximately 5,000 square feet with lots of cupping areas to handle traffic since we do around 80,000 rounds per year.

We built six greens using this method and even added on to some smaller greens to make them bigger. The new Tifdwarf closely matched our good old greens and has stayed pretty clean so far and putts pretty well. We didn't do a green this year, and with all the hurricane-clean up, I'm glad we didn't. We will consider doing more greens as we see ones that start giving us trouble.

Another in-house project we tackled was replacing our asphalt cart paths with concrete and extending the ending points to higher and drier ground. Most of the black-top paths had lots of holes and patches and were built in too many low areas or just in the wrong place for the play of the hole. We came up with a plan of doing 110 feet of path, 7 feet wide at a time.

This allowed us to demolish the old path, lay out the new path route formed up with two-by-fours and pour a ten-yard truckload of concrete at a time. Most of the course did not have access for a fully loaded cement truck, so we hauled most of the concrete ourselves using our dump-body EZ-Go utility vehicles, a third of a yard per trip,



Railroad-tie curbing is installed along the new paths at the tee boxes. Non-skid rubber mat runners are installed to prevent golfer slips and falls. Photo by Joel Jackson.

until we emptied the truck.

We have done more than 6,000 feet of concrete path along our greens and tees and installed railroad ties for curbing along the tee slopes. We also poured an additional 250 yards of concrete to enlarge our customer parking lot and create a pad around our maintenance building and made three storage bins for topdressing, sand, gravel and golf course landscape/storm debris that needed to be hauled away.

We also replaced the bridges on the course. Most of them were 30-inch corrugated pipe covered with limerock and asphalt. The pipes and fill were dug out and a concrete pad poured on each bank. Three steel beams were welded in place and 10-foot-long, 4x6 pressure-treated planks were installed on the beams with lag bolts. Twelve-foot-long 6x6 beams were used as side rails. We have done eight bridges over the years.

And last but not least we have installed more than two miles of drain pipe in low wet areas to keep the course open and more playable during the rainy season.

As you can see, we have successfully completed many in-house projects. Our owner, Ed McMillin and his son Jon, are always striving to make improvements to Winter Pines to give area golfers an enjoyable place to play golf at affordable prices. Once we fully recover from the effects of the 2004 hurricane season, I'm sure we will have more projects in the works.

Editor's Note: Recovering completely from the hurricane damage is requiring Ondo and his crew to cut down damaged trees, remove stumps and clear extensive areas of surface roots from decades-old oak trees and then backfill, grade and sod the scores of bare areas.

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