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Limb trimming and tree thinning is done in-house with a rented lift. The work is done on Mondays when the course is closed and in the winter when the turf is dormant and mowing hours are minimized. Photo by Chris Neff.

Beating the Shade!

By Chris Neff the golf course turf and keep the membership happy and satisfied with the program.

Timuquana Country Club is a private country club in Jacksonville. The golf course was built in 1923 by Donald Ross and restored by Bobby Weed in 1996. I have been the superintendent at Timuquana CC since September 2001.

Managing a tree program at Timuquana CC has been a very challenging task. Numerous members have grown to love the lush forest that was planted by the membership in the 1960s, but this has put a tremendous amount of pressure on the golf maintenance staff at Timuquana to manage

When the golf course was renovated in 1996, architect Weed found three different sets of 150-yard markers (cedar trees and ligustrum shrubs) in the overgrown forest that had changed the design of Donald Ross over 70 years. More than 800 trees were taken out throughout the golf course during the renovation in 1996. This cleared some of the forest and alleviated some of the shaded turf issues... but only for a short time.

In 2002, Timuquana CC hosted

the U.S. Senior Amateur. Once the Senior Amateur was over, I wanted to bring the golf course to another level of conditioning. I knew the only way to accomplish this was to establish a formal tree program.

The program was started in June of 2003 and still continues to be a feature in our maintenance plan throughout the year. Elements in this tree program include not only eliminating shade issues from the golf course, but also trimming limbs of the pines and oaks and brush clearing of vines and scrubby plant material.

HOW DID I SELL THE TREE PROGRAM?

Selling the tree program was not easy by any means. The Green Committee was the first group I had to convince. I drew a detailed map from our base map to show where the detrimental shaded areas actually occurred on the golf course and then I showed how the golf course was affected by the shade in those areas.

When I showed the map of the shade areas, I also brought out old aerial photos of the golf course from the 1940s through the renovation in 1996 and this showed Donald Ross's original design philosophy and then how the golf course quickly got overgrown through the years. This raised many eyebrows and got the attention of the committee.

The Green Committee accepted my ideas and I was told to put a dollar amount on the program and a time-frame. Once I completed the proposed plan, I then had to sell the Board of Governors.

After many meetings on the golf course with the board and my tree surgeon, approval was finally given. We were budgeted \$50,000 and a month to finish the two holes of tree work that just happened to be the worst shade and overgrown areas on the course.

This was done and was accepted by the majority of the membership. The biggest difference was the difference of growth in the turfgrass over that month. This created a new line item in the budget and they committed at least five years to the tree program.



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WORK APPROVAL AND AUTHORITY

All work is approved by the Board of Governors and Green Committee. If the areas are related to shade, the approval is normally very easy but sometimes the membership doesn't want to part with a certain tree, and the shade damage and results are understood and tolerated. Most times digital pictures are taken throughout the day and shown at meetings. Then we go to the specific areas to show the shade and decisions are then made. Same thing goes for removing brush or limbing trees. Approval comes first from the Board of Governors and the Green Committee and then work proceeds. Removing dead trees is completely up to me and then I report the work back to the Green Committee.

HOW AND WHEN IS THE TREE WORK DONE?

An outside contractor does most of the work. We have used the same tree company for the five years I've been here. This contractor specializes in golf courses and realizes the importance of the trees and how we manage them. It really helps having the same company because they know the golf course and how to move around the course without doing any damage. This contractor is at Timuquana on average three to five days



Forty years of unmanaged tree planting was causing serious shade problems on the golf course. Photo by Chris Neff.

a month all year long.

Our staff performs all brush clearing and limbing of pines and oaks. This work is performed with a rented high-reach lift at various times of the year. We have a large inventory of chain saws, pruning saws, and Bush Hogs to help remove this excess foliage. Most large work that may affect play or cause disruption is done on closed Mondays. This also lets us perform the work without being seen during the day and doesn't cause 19th Hole talk. We perform all this work during the winter when the golf course and grounds are dormant, and we don't overseed fairways or roughs, which would require lots of mowing.

STORM EFFECTS

We lost about 100 trees in the storms of 2004. Most of the trees were out of play but a few affected some areas. The trimming of the pines and oaks benefited the course tremendously as the amount of debris on the course was minimal and very easy to clean up. Since the storms, we have experienced many issues in certain areas of the course where the pine bark beetle has infested many pine trees. We have managed this problem by removing the trees immediately after identifying that the beetle has affected a tree. This pest damage has caused about another 75 trees to be lost throughout the golf course and grounds. We are hoping that the winter temperatures will slow this infestation and let us concentrate on working on more needed areas that are causing shade to the turf.

GUIDELINES AND POLICY FOR MEMORIAL AND BEAUTIFICATION TREES.

Timuquana has a very strict policy when it comes to planting memorial trees or donated plant material on the grounds! After the renovation in 1996, the Green Committee proposed to the Board of Governors to make a policy in the club bylaws to not allow anyone to plant trees or ornamentals for beautification or memorials without the approval of a golf course architect. This helps my answer when I'm constantly asked to plant something for a certain person or for a committee. Also, this keeps the character of the golf course intact from the original designer without getting crazy with plant material that doesn't keep the same character or may cause serious shade problems when the trees mature.

Each year the tree program gets a little bit easier. Now we're in our third year of the program and I feel like the accomplishments are finally showing their benefits for themselves. The turf is performing better in these areas and aesthetically the golf course has a different feel and look that really shows off the true beauty of the property. I'm hopeful that this program will be continued in the future. As we prepare for a potential renovation in 2008 we accomplished a lot that will help that project be successful.

I would like to thank the membership of Timuquana CC for the continued support of this program and most important to my staff for going above and beyond the call of duty during this time. Thanks!



Shade maps and old aerial photos showed the Green Committee and the Board of Governors how trees had changed the golf course design. Photo by Chris Neff.