

(Continued from page 20)

consumed to play. When compared to their playing on a championship layout, a longer course would not be enjoyable and perhaps they would retire from the game as over 50% of the players are elderly couples over the age of 60. Their handicaps are generally high (usually over 36), they play several times a week and are often on a fixed income. Their etiquette is generally poor. Failure to repair ball marks and divots, dragging their feet, playing with range balls and other caddyshack mannerisms are commonly observed. The key factor to the success of such operations, however, is the fact that the golfers enjoy themselves.

The ability for such a piece of real estate to pay for itself in operating expense is a credit to its clientele. The course is owned by the Town of Palm Beach. The Golf Commission advises on the operations, while the Town Manager ultimately oversees all decisions. If one is to closely scrutinize the facility, one will easily appreciate why the club is such a success. The condition of maintenance is excellent! Because of this, the golfers patronize their facility. Such quality which is more commonly found at the exclusive private clubs, can be credited to the outstanding golf course superintendent, Mr. Pete Brooks. Since his employment in September of 1980, the past four years of hard work is evident. Upon my recent visit for the writing of this article, I found the course to be in superb condition. The greens putt true, all is groomed to perfection, the turf is exceptionally healthy and there is very little to improve upon. Such quality is not uncommon, when considering Mr. Brook's background: a graduate of Lake City Community College in 1977 and the assistant superintendent at the Atlantis Golf Club, a community where Mr. Brooks credits his exposure to a high quality country club whereupon his training now exudes at the Palm Beach Par 3. Mr. Brooks is a credit to our industry; not to mention the game of golf, as Pete, who takes his game serious, has been known to tour many courses at even or near par. Mr. Brooks is not known to sit back and take it easy, but rather stands up and is active within his operations, as he and a work staff of two are constantly busy striving for perfection.

This type of operation is quite abnormal as compared to the so called bigger clubs. Let us examine the style of operation as perhaps many outsiders are unfamiliar with what all must still be done to maintain a so called smaller facility like a Par 3 course. Mr. Brooks, like most of us, has a budget to submit and be approved, while his expenditures are regulated on a government basis. Salaries are set by city standards, as they are government employees for the Town of Palm Beach. A budgeted operating expense of \$125,000 this past year at first might sound high to some individuals. We all realize the proper procedures for good maintenance and to fulfill the total spectrum, no short cuts can be allowed. Considering most everything needed to be performed on a large course must also be performed on a Par 3 course, the stated budget actually seems low.

Can you imagine what it would be like at your club, if you were to restrict all your play to within 25% of your given acreage. Obviously, the course would quickly show stress, however, this is exactly what Mr. Brooks must

contend with everyday — heavy play within a very small given space. The wear factors alone can play havoc with his program. The greens are aerified with the drum type at least six times per year. Verticutting is often performed to minimize grain on such a wind swept location. The Bermuda 328 greens are mowed as tight as nature will permit as 5/32 is the standard. Fertilization of the greens with frequent light applications is constantly aiding new growth, as the program averages 24 lbs. of N/1,000 sq. ft./grn /yr. A preventative rather than a curative concept is employed throughout Mr. Brook's program as he tries to stay on top of everything. There was an interesting occurrence with mother nature on the day that I visited that non agronomic people overlook.

Being so close to the ocean, the wind is constantly blowing. Even though on that day, the wind was a rather mild 15 mph, Pete says "wait until winter, when its constantly blowing at 40 MPH." Spraying, irrigation, dehydration and salt burn are common problems, The salty wind can become so severe, actual leaf tip burn looks much like fertilizer burn - afterall, the principles are the same. To compensate, irrigation can aid with washing off the salts and a few days later, mowing off the leaf tips will produce new green shoots until the next stiff wind comes. Mr. Brooks also acknowledges, the salty air even reduces the life expectancy of equipment. Frequent, thorough hosing off still cannot eliminate the problem as paint dulls quickly and rust is frequent.



Grandparents playing golf with their grandson. Carrying hand bags and walking are a common practice.

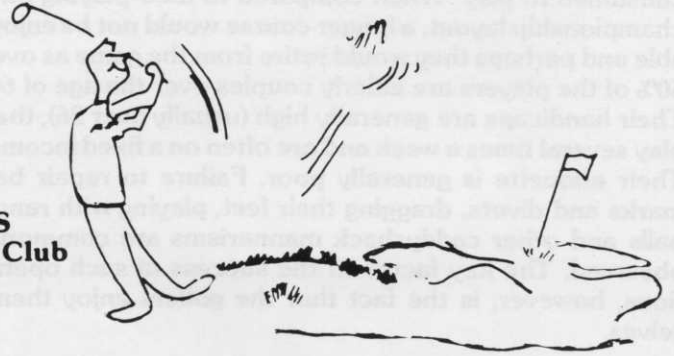
It seems so ironic to be so close to mother nature's beauty, yet everything is not ideal, as she ultimately controls all. Mr. Brooks has been working on evaluating the most ideal plants that are best adapted to his conditions. He does not want to over landscape and create extra maintenance. Landscaped windbreaks in isolated regions of the course has aided in blocking the wind and protecting the turf. Strategically located pockets of Seagrapes, Sabal Palms and other adaptable plants are beneficially beautifying the course. Mr. Brooks' goals are to beautify the course and achieve turf maintenance to the best level attainable within his capabilities of the budget and the geographic location.

It seems a course smaller in size would be easier to maintain, yet we of the profession are the first to realize this is far from true. Let it be known, there is no such thing as a small job for a golf course superintendent. There may be small golf courses, but the intensity of responsibility is just as severe — "if not more so per given acre." ■

NORTH FLORIDA

DIVOTS

By **EDDIE SNIPES**
Selva Marina Country Club



“Working For The City”

The word municipal, according to brother Webster, means “self government locally”. Oh, but this is what a golf course superintendent has always wanted; to actually self govern the golf course and be the final word of authority. This is a nice thought but in reality a municipal golf course has a more complex situation than one might suspect.

Government of the municipality and the high number of rounds of golf played a year are probably the two main concerns of a superintendent of a municipal course. Generally, a superintendent works directly for the city as a city employee or for the golf pro who in some cases leases the course from the city.

Attitudes about the golf course will be pending at election time. The mayor, city manager, and councilmen will all have great impact on the golf course budget and the course itself from election to election. Monies derived from the golf course operation may be used to bail out faltering departments in the city rather than being put back into the golf course. In this case, flexibility of the superintendent and the ability to compensate and change maintenance direction are a key for continued success. Visibility of the superintendent and good public relations

might help to ensure needed appropriations for the golf course and promote a professional image to the governing bodies of the city.

With forty to fifty thousand rounds of golf played a year, or more, maintenance on a municipal course may be taking a back seat to the dollar sign. In a situation like this, less different heights of cut and chemical edging to reduce handwork are ways to maximize limited maintenance time due to heavy play. The importance of concentrating on doing a few things well and completely will be more beneficial on a municipal course than trying to over extend your maintenance abilities. Patience should be a prerequisite when hiring employees on a municipal course. Being able to understand and cope while working under heavy play conditions are a necessity. Many superintendents have good luck with retired or semi-retired personnel that have the demeanor necessary to work under such conditions and not be overly lax.

Municipal golf courses and municipal golf course superintendents bring golf to the masses. Their special problems and uniqueness should not be overlooked or side stepped because of the value that they hold in furthering the game of golf and our profession.■



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The Florida Municipal Golf Course Association

By ALAN WEITZEL
President

Why form an association? I was not around back in the 1930's when the South Florida Golf Course Superintendent's Association was formed, but I was in 1978 when the Florida Municipal Golf Course Association was, and I bet the reasons were very similar, "Education". Just as in the 1930's when members of the various golf courses started comparing their courses to one another, a need arose where the superintendents of these courses found it beneficial to meet to exchange ideas. Thus, in the late 1970's a similar concern arose from the managers of municipal golf courses when taxpayers became increasingly concerned on what government was spending its tax dollars. Thus, in 1978, the Florida Municipal Golf Course Association was formed.

There are 60 municipal golf courses in the state of Florida run by 42 municipalities/counties. 26 of these municipalities have become members of the Florida Municipal Golf Course Association which accounts for 73% of the municipal golf courses in the state. This high percentage of membership is even more impressive when one considers that the majority of those municipalities who are not members

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do not actually manage their golf facilities, but lease them to outside private concerns.

Membership in the Florida Municipal Golf Course Association is open to any municipality or organization interested in the operation of a municipal golf course. Annual dues are \$30 per year. The association meets 4 times a year with meetings held either at a municipal golf course or in conjunction with an allied association trade show. The meetings usually last 2 hours in which 1 hour is usually reserved for a round table discussion. This discussion allows each member present a chance to voice a problem they are facing at their facility or enlighten the group on something new they are doing at their golf course.

One of the most important things that the association does each year is publish an annual survey. Each regular member is sent a 10 page survey form to complete. The responses of these surveys are then compiled in a book and distributed to the members. This year we had 21 municipalities take part in the survey. This survey has become a source of pride to the association as well as a valuable tool.

Anyone wanting any further information on the Florida Municipal Golf Course Association can write or call one of the following officers.

Alan Weitzel/President
c/o Briary Bay Golf Course
9373 S.W. 134 St.
Miami, FL 33176
Phone: (305) 235-6754

Ray Weaver
c/o Dubsdread Golf Course
549 W. Par St.
Orlando, FL 32804
Phone: (305) 843-7311

George Pickel/Sec.-Tres.
c/o Mangrove Bay Golf Course
875 62nd Ave. N.E.
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
Phone: (813) 893-7772



West Coast Buccaneers



By MALVIN HALLFORD
Seven Springs Country Club

Seven Springs Country Club is a 36 hole condominium development located in Pasco County which has as one of its courses a 4,468 yard par 64 Executive Course. This course was built during the early Seventies for the membership of the club only while the Championship Course remains semi-private.

From a playability standpoint the course is extremely challenging to play for the good golfer to say the least, while high handicappers find the course quite unforgiving.

From a maintenance standpoint the course offers some interesting challenges. The greens average just a shade over 2,200 sq. feet while the tees average around 1,240 sq. feet. Couple these small figures with the fact that during the season we'll average close to 230 rounds per day on the Executive Course, and you can see its pretty hard to keep the putting surfaces looking good and impossible to keep the small tees covered with rye during the busy season. One problem of significance is pin placements on some greens which are under 2,000 sq. feet in size. It is difficult or impossible to have the pins moved far enough

away from the previous day's cut to reduce traffic wear. This problem of small size goes into another area. We also have a few traps on the course but the ones we have are small and demand hand attention instead of using a machine, thus causing a sharp rise in labor costs.

In comparison to the Championship Course the area of maintenance is quite small encompassing only slightly over sixty acres. This necessitates constructing tees that have sufficient teeing area to accommodate mostly iron play yet not look out of place on a course of this size. Another problem in maintaining our Executive Course is accessibility to the course with equipment. All the adjacent property is condominium property which is off limits for our equipment making long out of the way transporting necessary at times.

All in all though the biggest problem I feel that we have is a fine golf course which is played so seldom by the majority of our members and that very few non-members ever get a chance to see. ■

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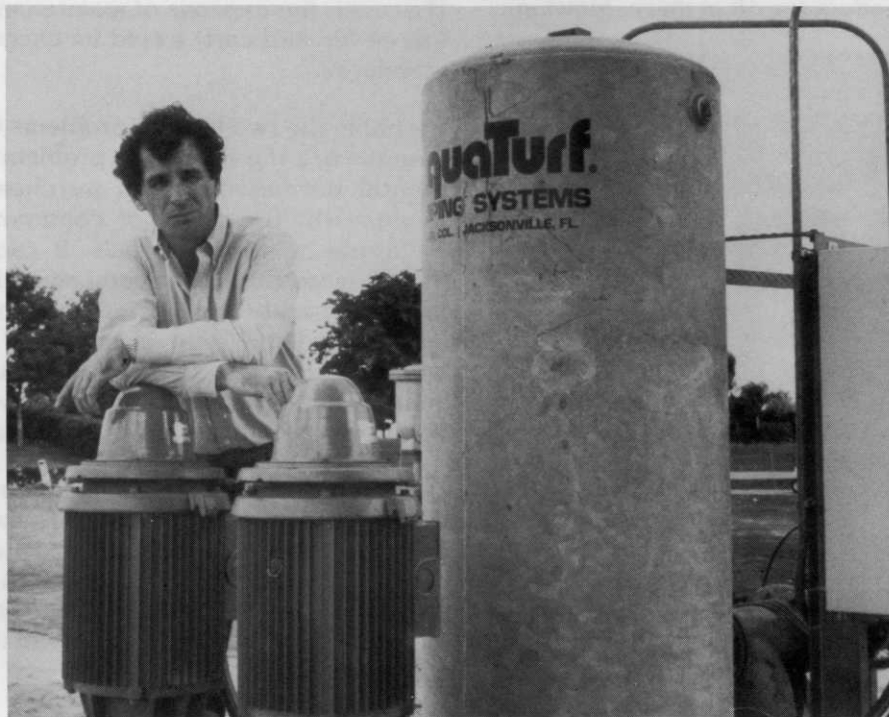
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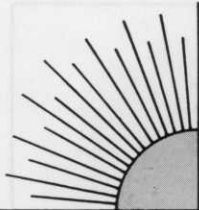
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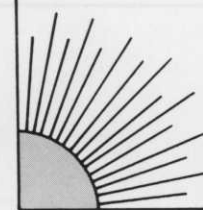
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South Florida Sunshine



By BRAD KOCHER
Inverrary Country Club

The Municipal Golf Course

South Florida has many municipal golf course operations. Depending on who you talk to, these operations are designed to provide recreational service to the residents and in some cases, provide both a service and a source of revenue.

Municipal courses are usually very crowded. Golf is one of the most popular leisure sports in Florida and there are many retired people who have the time to enjoy a lot of golf. As a result, many muni-courses open at dawn's early light and close when the sun goes down. In this manner, the course can be enjoyed by more residents thus minimizing complaints that not enough people can play and enjoy the public service.

Early tee times do present some maintenance problems. It is difficult to do a lot of maintenance work ahead of the morning tee times, when golfers tee off at dawn. Mowing,

watering, fertilizing and spraying is difficult enough to get accomplished ahead of play in the morning with a 7:30 or 8:00 A.M. tee off typical of private clubs, let alone the 6:30 or 7:00 A.M. tee off time at municipal courses. This can severely hamper the efficiency and productivity of a maintenance operation.

Most municipal operations do not adhere to the highest standards of maintenance typical of private clubs. The reason for this is there is generally not a demand for highly manicured turf areas by the golfer. The rates charged are much lower by comparison to private clubs and the price to deliver a highly manicured course would cause green fees and cart fees to be more than most golfers are willing to pay. It's not that muni operations cannot have high standards. There are a lot of very talented superintendents who are capable of delivering a high quality product. However, the expense of maintenance to cost of product (green fee and cart) would be excessive by most golfers standards.

Probably the two biggest problems that plague public fee courses are the efficiency problems created by governmental bureaucracy and purchasing limitations. To begin with, the chain of command often involves a multitude of public officials. It can start with the City Manager, go through several councilmen, commissioners, head of parks and recreation, course manager, then superintendent. With this many officials to approve budgets and purchases, the course superintendent almost needs to be politically motivated and oriented to be able to get his job objectives accomplished.

Of equal consideration to some municipal operations are their involvement with unions. The wages that are paid at these courses are generally higher than competitive market rates in the industry, and the benefits as well are also excessive. This causes labor costs at most muni operations to be out of competition with the courses they must compete against.

The biggest drawback at union controlled courses is the difficulty in managing their workers effectively. Just like any operation, there are good and bad employees. The time it takes to discharge a bad employee is excessive and usually puts an undo amount of strain on both supervisor and fellow workers. It is commonly stated that it can take up to a year to fire a bad employee. There is an inordinate amount of warnings, grievance procedures, arbitration, etc. that take up the productive

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(Continued from page 26)

time of many people. I happen to believe there should always be proper warning and documentations of improper work performance before an employee is discharged, but the union procedures are much longer than what could be considered reasonable. I guess the real losers are the other employees who see how long an unproductive employee can keep his job.

Also at most municipal operations, 40 hours a week is the limit for an employee. This does pose scheduling problems for weekend work (grass does not quit growing on Saturday and Sunday). In addition, studies have shown that a little overtime is not only productive, but very motivating for employees both from having a greater sense of involvement and from a financial standpoint.

Purchasing is the other area that inhibits many municipal operations from working effectively. Budgets must be prepared a year to a year and a half in advance and are usually strictly followed. Budgets at many courses are guidelines, and allow for the unpredictability of weather, new insect problems, and other extremes that can affect turfgrass management. It would be a slow reaction by most municipal operations to the emergencies that can frequently occur.

Additionally, superintendents must go through a long chain of command and extensive bid procedures for capital expenditures. Bid specifications must allow for these competitive bids on equipment without specifying any manufacturers. One, three or five gang reel mower may be unequivocally superior or unique, yet the specifications must be written in terms that allow for these bids. The types of requirements usually result in the lowest bid being the major criterion for purchase. Quite often a less desirable piece of equipment ends up being purchased because it is the lowest on the bid sheet.

Municipal courses, like any other course, have problems. It takes a special superintendent or manager to be able to deal effectively with the agronomic, personnel and purchasing considerations particular to his operation. He must be able to relate them to the governmental red tape that must be overcome to operate effectively. The business of "selling programs and ideas" to commissions and city managers becomes a full time consideration and one that takes a different talent, patience and perception than most superintendents possess.

As a last observation, I find it somewhat controversial that municipalities and county governments find it desirable to get involved in golf course operations. In most every area of governmental involvement, they are providing a public service that does not conflict with private enterprise. Parks, public beaches and recreation facilities rarely compete with the private sector dollar for business. However, municipal golf courses compete directly with other public course operations that are held individually.

I usually get the answer that municipal courses make it affordable for more people to enjoy golf. The question arises - at who's expense? If all the costs (including administrative)

administrative) were tallied up for the cost of a municipal operation, I doubt that most would be at a break-even status. Then the questions surface, (1) how many residents in the area served by municipal courses use them? and (2) should taxpayers be underwriting the cost of an operation that serves so few? ■



"Who says a tornado cannot strike twice in the same place." On Tuesday, April the 9th, a tornado struck the Boca Greens Country Club, taking the roof off the house in (photo 1) not to mention knocking down, snapping or destroying over 200 trees within the project (photo 2). Over the next four days, extra crews and overtime within the maintenance department had put back up those trees downed and hauled away and cleaned up the trees unsalvageable. Just as the crew headed for home on the afternoon of Friday the 13th at 2:16 p.m. another tornado swept thru the West Boca Raton area, only to find most every tree that had been previously staked back up to be blown down once again! Yes, the wind can really be blown out of your sail - however, we knew surely a tornado would not strike ... a third time???

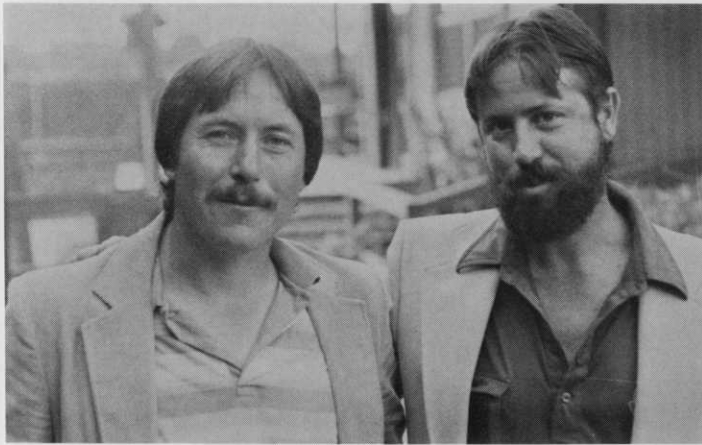


Treasure Coast "Tide"ings

By JAMES P. CALLAGHAN
Rio Mar Country Club

Sebastian Municipal & Island Dunes... Two Unique Operations

Newton Krages and John Cowan are two sharp Golf Course Superintendents. You have to be sharp in order to provide the playing conditions that they do with limited budgets, equipment and manpower.



John Cowan, left, and Newton Krages — two "unique" golf course superintendents.

After reading about much political controversy concerning the neighboring Sebastian golf course, I thought Newt Krages would be a good candidate for the FLORIDA GREEN. I must say that I was very impressed upon my arrival at the golf course. It was in very good condition.

The most unique fact about Sebastian Municipal is not really a problem. The city of Sebastian (pop. 3,500) is the second smallest city in the entire country that operates a municipal golf course! The course was designed by Chuck Ankrom (who designed Monte Carlo, Sandpiper Bay and Indian River Plantation) and was built on land leased from the Sebastian Municipal Airport. Sebastian Municipal is a very challenging golf course spread out over 155 acres. It is well-trapped, has lots of water hazards and boasts elevation changes that are not common to Florida golf courses.

Newt Krages was hired by the city of Sebastian shortly after the earthwork began. Newt stated, "I was rather fortunate to have been on the job from the beginning. It has made my job a lot easier since I know how the course was built from head to toe." He continued, "Sebastian must be given credit for making sure the first golf course superintendent was hired before the course was built."

The city of Sebastian has undertaken a tremendous responsibility. Shortcomings are unavoidable with a municipal operation. The city has to pay off a large bond issue that was secured to pay for the golf course. Since the golf course is chartered to be self-sustaining, there are times when correct procedures are not carried out.

The day that I visited the golf course and made plans to play golf, we were greeted by a heavy thunderstorm. After 1.2 inches of rain fell in less than thirty minutes, water stood in many places on the course. Most private courses would have been closed under the conditions that were present. Although I was delighted to be able to still play, I knew that the course really should have been closed. Municipal courses rely on the constant ring of the cash register and closing the golf course because of standing water isn't justified. With the constant flow of golf carts on wet fairways Sebastian Municipal now has a severe compaction problem. Since the course is to remain open whenever the elements are favorable, a program of extensive cart path construction has begun. This should help to alleviate the compaction created when conditions dictate restricted cart use.

Newt realizes that a municipal operation is different but he has been able to make the most of his operation. He maintains the golf course with a crew of 5 and is able to provide good playing conditions. He commented, "We can't groom as much and special projects put a strain on the operation, but we manage to give the golfer conditions expected in order for him to have an enjoyable round of golf."

Before the course was built, the city had the foresight to provide for an adequate maintenance facility and equipment. Newt's only reservation was that all the basic equipment was purchased before he came aboard and he would have made several substitutions.

The biggest headache for Newt has been poor fittings and some bad pipe in the irrigation system. Just about every 2" tee on the golf course has split along with several sections of various size pipe. Newt was on site when the system was installed and feels that this problem was due to faulty materials that couldn't be detected until they were in operation.

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Since Sebastian Municipal is still in its infancy, it's large financial obligation (\$1,600,000) is paramount. This fact hinders Newt's operation to some degree. Construction bonds are going to have to be refinanced shortly and higher interest rates will probably add another burden to the cash flow. Also, the lease between the Sebastian Airport and the golf course has not been approved by the FAA and substantial back-rent is owed the airport. These financial problems have shrouded the future outlook somewhat. It's difficult to plan budgets when you can't rely on available funds.

Over the years, politics have been most controversial in the small city of Sebastian. The original governing body for the golf course was a five-member committee that operated the golf course on a day to day basis. Now the new mayor has taken that authority away from the committee and the operation is in the hands of the golf professional who will now work in the capacity of general manager. Luckily for Newt, he has a good rapport with the golf professional.

Because of politics, uncertainty will always exist in a municipal operation. Newt Krages has mastered living with the aura of uncertainty hanging over his head and manages to provide the City of Sebastian with an excellent golfing facility.



This par 3 at Island Dunes, carved out of a mangrove swamp, is typical of the enhancing environment found throughout the golf course.

Down the road some forty miles, John Cowan has encountered similar problems at Island Dunes in Jensen Beach. Island Dunes is an oceanfront high-rise condominium project with a nine-hole (par 31) golf course designed by Joe Lee. John's time is split between the golf course and landscape operations at the condominium and clubhouse. Since the golf course is a selling point for condos, John has received adequate funding in order to keep the grounds in good condition. But John stated that uncertainty is lurking in the shadows. Because only a few sales have been made, the future will be hard to predict if the developer doesn't receive the return on the investment that's anticipated.

Although John's maintenance crew is the same size as Newt's (5), sometimes it's difficult to keep up especially when something goes wrong. He commented, "There are times when I have to shift all my employees to landscape detail and we fall behind on the golf course. When existing plant material is torn out to make repairs, we have to jump on restoration, It just takes awhile to catch up on our other chores." John tries to keep two employees on the golf course and two on landscape maintenance. The fifth man alternates duties as mechanic and filling in wherever needed. This structure works well except when someone is on vacation or out sick. "I'm lucky to have a very flexible crew, but whenever I'm a man short, we are predisposed for untimely surprises to take us a step backwards", John stated.



An efficient operation at Sebastian Municipal provides for excellent course conditions!

Having worked at Augusta National, Seminole and Mariner Sands, John has had a taste of large scale golf course operations. He laughs at the first predicament he encountered at Island Dunes when he took over last winter. Only one walking greensmower was in operation for the first Pro-Am. With 55,000 square feet of greens to be mowed by eight O'clock, the greensmower was out at 4:30 A.M. working by the light of a pickup truck! John put it all in a nutshell. He said "short courses don't have small problems - they have the same major problems as championship golf courses, and those problems are escalated by minimum labor and equipment. As much as a routine and preventative maintenance schedule is wanted (and much needed) it's almost impossible. All you can do is give it your best shot!"

Various limitations are by far the most difficult problems to overcome at many Executive, Municipal and Par 3 golf courses. Both Newton Krages and John Cowan feel that they have learned to deal with limitations effectively. And they both feel that their accomplishments are worth substantially more when compared to accomplishments that result from unlimited budgets. Overcoming unique problems have made them unique golf course superintendents!■