

Challenge —



Photos by Brian Everhart

Number 17

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1982

as a golf course superintendent. Hayden was superintendent of the Jacksonville Beach Municipal Golf Course and he became Snipes's mentor.

"My first job was to ride around the course in the back of a '63 Dodge pickup truck with another guy and rake all the traps by hand," he recalls. "They wouldn't even let me drive the truck."

And now Eddie Snipes, CGCS, is well into his third year as superintendent of the Oak Bridge Club, one of the posh, private Arvida clubs at Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach and host of the 1992 GCSAA Championship.

From hand-raking the traps, Snipes "picked up on things and sort of became the utility guy — I could do just about anything that needed to be done." He was the course mechanic when he left Jacksonville Beach Muni after four and a half years.

He'd also learned how to play golf with the help of a set of Hogan Apex clubs he bought for \$60 "from a guy who sold them out of the back seat of his car."

"I'm one of the people who enjoy golf strictly for the sake of playing a game and being out of doors," says Snipes, who lists golf as his principal leisure activity. An achilles tendon injury early this year ended a budding career in flag football.

"I guess I'll concentrate on being a good father and uncle," he says.

When Hayden became superintendent at San Jose Golf Club in Jacksonville in 1977, Snipes went with him as "utility man."

Oak Bridge Golf Club

Ownership: Arvida/JMB Partners.

Playing Policies: Private; 28,000 rounds a year (some tee times reserved for guests at Marriott Resort)

Design & Construction: Original design by Bill Amick in late 1960s. Renovated in 1987 by Ed Seay and Eighteen Construction. 6,383 yards from back tees; par 69, course rating 70.3, slope 126.

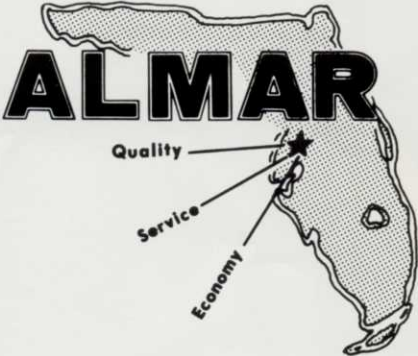
Turf: Greens average 4,000 square feet, Tifdwarf overseeded with poa trivialis and bentgrass (14:1); tees and fairways (28 acres) in Tifton 419 bermudagrass overseeded with perennial rye; roughs in Tifton 419 maintained at 1½ inch.

Hazards: 72 sand bunkers; water from one lake and meandering canal comes into play on 13 holes.

Irrigation: Toro Vari-Time II electric system with "about 600" heads. Source is treated effluent.

Maintenance crew: 14 including superintendent, assistant, mechanic, two landscape technicians, spray technician, irrigation technician.

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- Performs well in damp soil
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When Snipes was graduated from UNF with a B.A. in psychology in 1978, Hayden offered him the job as assistant superintendent.

"I had thought I was going to make a career in criminal justice, possibly counseling offenders, but as I talked to people

in that field, it seemed to me that they weren't getting much accomplished. Most of their time was spent pushing papers around, documenting facts."

He accepted Hayden's offer and has never regretted the decision.

In 1983, he became superintendent at

Selva Marina CC and on July 17, 1989 — two months after earning his certification — he took over at Oak Bridge.

"This is a great golf course," Snipes says with unabashed pride of the course designed by Bill Amick in the late 1960s and redesigned by Ed Seay in 1987. "If



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you can score on this course, you can play the game of golf.”

Although it's short — 6,383 from the tips — the course carries a USGA course rating of 70.3 and a slope of 126.

“The front nine is pretty straightforward, but you'd better not go to sleep,” Snipes says. “You'd better be conscious when you make the turn because the back side comprises the best nine holes of golf I've ever played.”

Two holes — the par-five 11th and par-three 17th — were included in North Florida's “Dream 18” selected by the *Florida Times-Union*, Jacksonville's daily newspaper. Keep in mind that the area includes the likes of The Ravines, Amelia Island Plantation, the TPC and several other famous courses.

Speaking of the neighboring TPC, also part of the Sawgrass complex, superintendent Fred Klauk, a perennial member of the Florida team in the annual GCSAA Championship, is club champion at Oak Bridge.

The challenge at Oak Bridge comes from two factors common to Florida courses but more abundant here than at most: sand and water. The course sports 72 bunkers and water comes into play on 13 holes.

If the golf challenge is typical of Florida, the maintenance challenge isn't. The high organic clay soil of the area limits percolation.

“Water management is a real challenge,” he says. “In winter, it can become a nightmare, especially with our shady greens and fairways. It takes minimal amounts of rain to really get water moving and since seven-eighths of this place is surrounded by water, we have to be extremely careful when we spray anything.”

Even if water movement weren't a problem, however, Snipes says he is “not one to spray just for the sake of spraying. I try to use a minimum of chemicals and wait until there is something we really need to go after and can't get at it any other way.”

“Just because the label says you *can* spray every 14 days doesn't mean you *have to*,” he says. “Often a mechanical or cultural treatment will do just as well.”

To help combat the problems created



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by his unique soil conditions, Snipes double-spikes the greens weekly in winter and runs a light topdressing program through the spring.

Oak Bridge is irrigated with treated effluent it gets free from the St. Johns Utility Service. In fact, Arvida's contract with the service requires it to provide a means of disposing of all wastewater created by its developments.

“I think (FGCSA President) Tom Benefield has hit the nail on the head with his campaign against charging golf courses for using treated effluent water,” Snipes says. “It's double taxation.”

Snipes manages the golf course with a crew of 14, counting himself. He reports to General Manager David Glass, who also supervises Arvida's Jacksonville Golf and Country Club and a beach club.

Although managing Oak Bridge is

challenging, Snipes wouldn't have it any other way.

“I like the nature of this beast,” he says. “This job gives you everything you could want — challenge, responsibility, opportunity for leadership. Every day I learn something and I'm an educator at the same time.”

“This job is a life style. You give up your weekends and holidays but it makes you a more complete person.”

“Sometimes, when I'm riding the course in the afternoon before going home, a group of members — often a family — will flag me down and tell me how much they appreciate what we do.”

“To see them out there enjoying something you have helped produce — how could you have a greater reward than that?”

E.R. Jahna Industries

Sand company's golf market share growth reflects involvement with FGCSA chapters

They call him the Sand Man but you'll never see him sleeping.

Not with seven Florida GCSA chapter meetings to attend every month and 500 golf courses to keep supplied with sand.

Joe Johnson, Emil Jahna's ambassador to the golf course industry, has seen a lot of changes to the industry since he joined the Lake Wales firm in 1973.

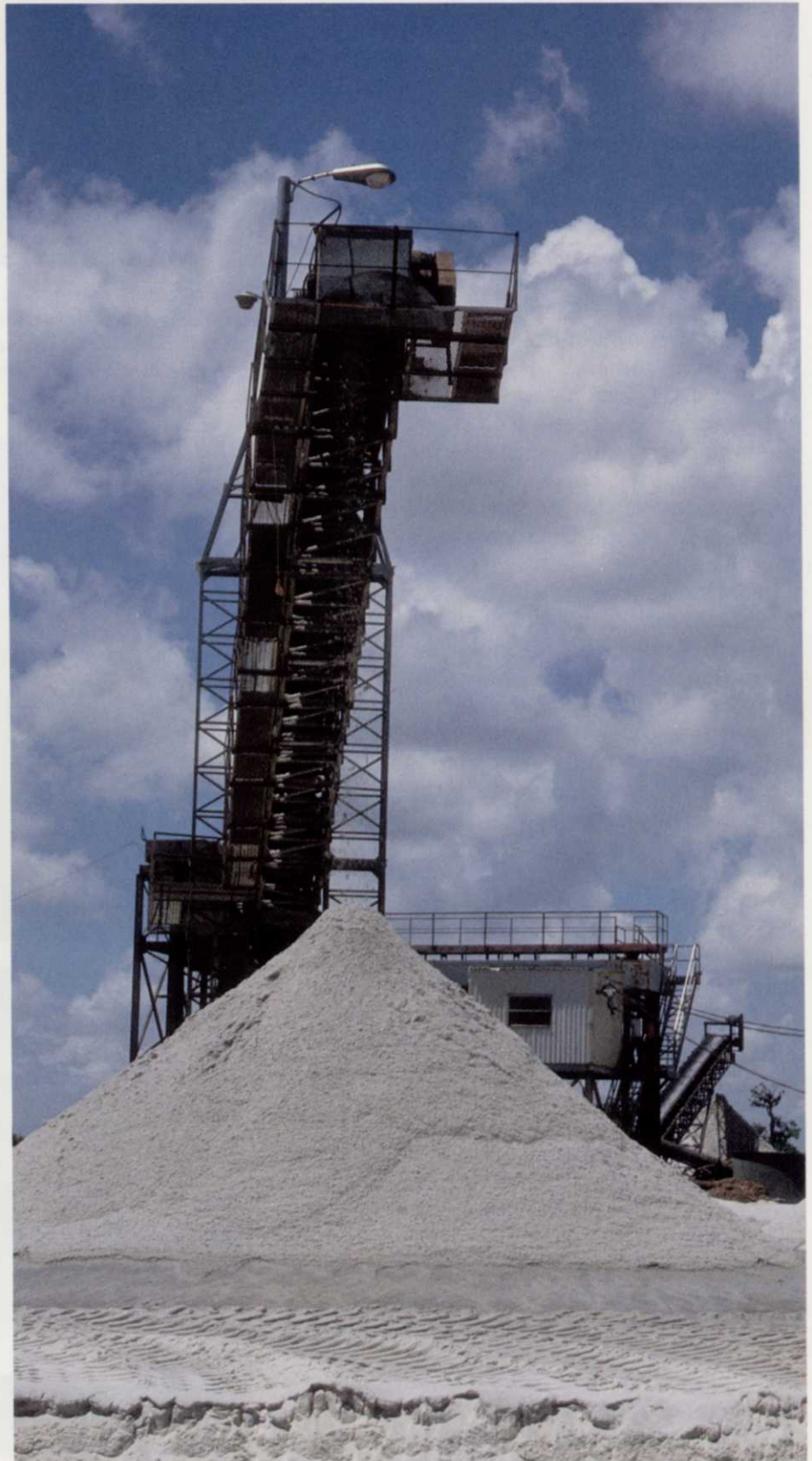
"Golf course construction is a heck of a lot more sophisticated now than it used to be," says Johnson, a retired submarine navigator. "Superintendents are much sharper — they're more dedicated and better educated. They sure are a lot smarter."

Bear's Paw CC in Naples was Johnson's first customer; Everglades GCSA, which serves the south Gulf Coast, was the first superintendents' association he joined. Soon he picked up two more Jack Nicklaus courses in Palm Beach County — Loxahatchee and Bear Lakes — and it was about that time that the Palm Beach GCSA broke off from the South Florida GCSA. Johnson joined both.

Now he also belongs to the Treasure Coast, North Florida, Central Florida and Florida West Coast associations as well. And company pilot Gene Vaadi belongs to the Suncoast GCSA.

"There were only four chapters in the whole state when I joined Everglades," he said.

With half the state's golf courses and most of its builders buying at least some of their sand from Jahna, golf accounts for "about 20 percent" of the firm's business, Johnson says. The rest is used for construction.



Freshly screened and washed sand is stockpiled for delivery.

E.R. Jahna Industries was founded by Emil R. Jahna, Jr., in 1950. Emil, Sr., had been a sand miner in Lake Wales and his son wanted to branch out. Now the company owns five sand mines, two rock mines and a trucking subsidiary with a fleet of 60 trucks for hauling his product.

Jahna has two sand mines in Clermont, one in Polk City and two more — the famous Ortona mines — in LaBelle. The rock mines are in Crystal River and Brooksville.

But it is Ortona sand — a world-renowned quartz silica sand at the south end of Florida's Ridge — that is the company's big draw.

Jahna "makes" seven different kinds of sand at its various mines: three specifically for golf courses, DOT, well point, and two grades of dried sand for sandblasting. DOT, the medium-coarse sand specified by the Florida Department of Transportation for highway construction, accounts for about 60 percent of the company's production.

The three golf course sands, sometimes called trapsand (although the medium grade is also popular for making greens mix), are all finer than DOT sand. Well point sand is slightly coarser than DOT.

One grade of sandblasting sand is finer than the finest trapsand and the other is an interesting story.

It's a very coarse sand; the grains are about 1 to 2 millimeters in diameter, almost large enough to be considered very fine gravel. Florida sand producers never made very much of it because there wasn't too much demand... until the United States Golf Association's guidelines for construction of a golf green suddenly became popular with Florida architects and builders.

The coarse grade of sandblasting sand is about the same size as the USGA's infamous "choker" sand, the two-inch layer it specifies between the topsoil and the gravel and drainage tiles.

"Now we can't make enough of it," says Johnson who was not convinced the choker layer was really necessary until very recently. "I think I've changed my mind on choker sand, but I don't think they need to hold to such strict specs. We sell coarse sand for septic tanks with some fines in it and it works great."

USGA specs do not permit any "fines."



Joe Johnson, right, sales rep for E.R. Jahna Industries, listens intently to a golf course superintendent, Rich Brogan, formerly at Polo Trace. Also listening are Dick Blake, second from left, former GCSAA and FGCSA president and Jim Lanier, general manager of the Ortona Mine.



A truck is loaded for delivery.

Jim Lanier, Ortona mines general manager, left, demonstrates the sand washer to Rich Brogan.



Clermont East is one of five Jahna sand mines in Florida and one of two that can produce choker sand.



Blake and Lanier examine some stockpiled sand.



Conveyer can be rotated around the washer to stockpile sand once it has been screened and washed.

To those who have known him for a long time, the Sand Man's changed attitude toward the choker layer must be put on a scale with the worst-to-first finishes of the Minnesota Twins and Atlanta Braves... or a ma-

ior religious conversion—say, atheism to Christianity.

The problem with choker sand, according to Johnson, is that it is very difficult to make. Out of a ton of high-grade Ortona sand (choker

sand is also made at Jahna's Clermont East mine), no more than 15 percent will screen out to choker size.

"It takes about 1,000 tons of choker sand to make 18 greens and

Screws force the screened sand out of the washer and onto the conveyer.

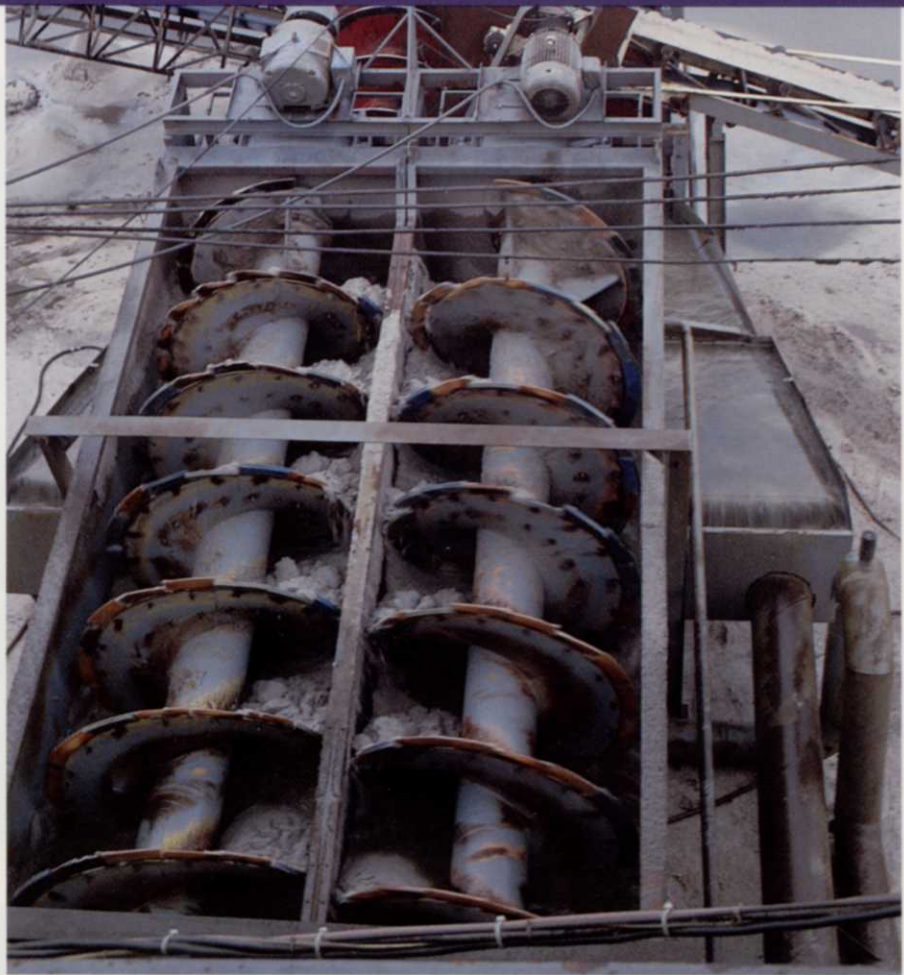
we've never been able to get more than 700 tons at any one time," Johnson says. "Right now (late November) we have 125 tons on the ground."

The rate at which the company can make choker sand is set largely by the rate at which it can sell the other grades that are left after the coarse stuff has been screened out.

A rejuvenated state highway construction program would do wonders for the availability of choker sand.

Ironically, while he'd certainly like to sell more sand, and the more of the common grades he can sell, the more choker sand will be available, Johnson says one of the most common mistakes young superintendents make is to put too much sand in their bunkers.

"I always recommend that they don't put in more than 3½ inches and then wait and see how much it settles. They can always add more, but it's hard to take it out." ■



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