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ered. In fact, the 25th anniversary of the annual PGA event, The Disney-Oldsmobile Classic, will be celebrated on the original courses this October.

Each of those courses have had their greens rebuilt to USGA specifications over the past three years. Two important factors became the driving forces in adding to Disney's golf course inventory. First, like many Central Florida courses, Disney was turning away play in the winter. Second, Disney was building more hotels which would mean more guests to accommodate year round. And so it was that the Disney Development Company (DDC) was commissioned to build Bonnet Creek.

With environmental protection and enhancement foremost in mind, the project

began. A wildlife study revealed a colony of gopher tortoises in an upland habitat on the Osprey Ridge site. The tortoises were moved to a temporary holding area during construction. Wetland areas were



Scott Welder

**Osprey Ridge Golf
Course Superintendent**

Originally from: Evansville, Indiana.

Family: Wife, Doris. Children: Daughter, Tonya.

Education: Studied architecture at Brevard Junior College. Studied landscaping at Valencia Community College.

Employment: Walt Disney World, Superintendent since 1988; worked for company since 1971. Previously served as Superintendent of Palm and Lake Buena Vista Courses.

Hobbies/Interests: Fishing, old cars, golf.

Professional affiliations: FTGA; GCSAA; Director, Central Florida GCSA.

Memorable moments: The opening of Bonnet Creek.

Advice: Be a "hands on" person. Hard work does pay off.

Mentors: Larry Kamphaus, a close associate for 24 years and sharer of information and knowledge. Joel Jackson, a true professional golf course superintendent. Pat Hennessey, my fellow superintendent at Bonnet Creek, who showed me that hard work pays off.

About Osprey Ridge: The tremendous popularity of the course makes conditioning a challenge. We have a large volume of play and no 1 & 10 tee set up to give us time to work on the first hole unless we're closed. We use a Toro Hydroject aerifier in the winter to help relieve compaction.

**Each course has
its own man-
made irrigation
lake which is
recharged with
effluent
water...**

roped off just like tournament fairways. Miles of silt fencing was also installed along all wetlands that bordered the construction sites. All storm runoff is contained and filtered by spreader swales, internal drainage, man-made marshes, ponds, and lakes.

All perimeter irrigation is part circle, watering only the golf course. On Eagle Pines, Dye went even further by irrigating only tee tops with small heads and leaving large areas between tee and fairway unirrigated in the ever famous "waste area" concept. We will visit the waste area topic later.

Each course has its own man-made irrigation lake which is recharged with effluent water which makes each course a filter and recharge location for water resource conservation and recycling. All of the other Disney courses have been retrofitted to use effluent water.

The Bonnet Creek irrigation is controlled by a Rainbird Maxi computer system complete with a weather station to provide on site data to customize the daily watering needs. Each controller in the field has its own preset rain switch to turn off that zone if it should receive rainfall that exceeds the selected amount. The system is not fool proof. If the weather station records sufficient rainfall it shuts down the whole system. After studying the rainfall patterns across the two courses six rain gauges were installed to double check the computer's shutdown commands and to provide data to adjust watering times.

Both architects did an excellent job designing drainage systems that move surface runoff to drain basins quickly. Much of the design credit goes to the on-site Design Associates, Steve Masiak for the Fazio group and Michael O'Connor for Pete Dye. The only thing they couldn't control was the soil content on some of the holes.

Invariably it seems in the construction phase of every project that heavy hard-pan and clay soils find their way to the surface of fairways instead of being buried under mounds. Naturally, during periods of heavy rainfall those areas don't percolate as readily as sandier profiles, thus prolonging the challenge and aggravation to superintendents and golfers everywhere.

Another lesson learned during this project is that USGA spec greens really should have an inner and outer head system. Inner for the the putting surface and outer for the slopes, bunkers, etc. Normally the surrounds of the green will not be as porous as the green's well itself with its special sandy mix and intricate drainage system.

Trying to follow the recommended deep watering techniques can be a problem when watering two radically different areas with one head. This concern is not unique to Bonnet Creek, but one that can be avoided in future projects everywhere.

Landscaping the courses was easy. Look around. What's

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Osprey Ridge #14, par 4. Bunkers and ridges.

Osprey Ridge

Oaks and hickories surround Osprey Ridge # 13.

already here? Pines. Oaks. Cypress. Bays. Hickories. Maples. Wax myrtles. OK! Plant some more where you need them. Extensive use was also made of low maintenance native grasses like cordgrass and gulf muhly, which has a dynamite pink bloom in the fall.

Bahiagrass was planted in unirrigated roughs and areas that required stabilizing like some of the remote lake banks.

The only other non-native plantings on the grounds are a splash or two of annual beds along the entrance road; a ground-cover bed of jasmine on a steep slope behind the clubhouse; and a small Shillings holly bed for Mickey's nose on the putting green. That's what I said, "Mickey's nose!" The boss in profile. You have to see it to believe it!

Growing in the courses, especially Osprey Ridge, was a challenge just from





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an access point of view. The course is a links layout with the ninth and tenth holes the farthest point from the maintenance facility.

The four closest holes 1, 2, 17 and 18 were the last to be completed. Holes 3 through 16 were on the other side of a wetland area. Construction of a permitted wooden bridge to span the wetland was also completed late in the project.

Therefore, equipment and personnel had to be driven or transported several miles around the property on a perimeter canal bank road that put extra wear and tear on new equipment not normally incurred during grow in.

There were haul roads that cut through the Eagle Pines course but they were often impassable due to heavy rains and rutting by construction equipment. A Cushman is no match for a scraper or a dump truck.

And when the project got down to the last four holes it was September and not much time left to sprig before fall weather

could set in. The final holes were sodded wall to wall except the greens surfaces. In doing so, a caravan of sod trucks made their way to Bonnet Creek from every available sod farm. Having said that, no one should be surprised if we came up with some color and texture differences in some of our Tifway 419 areas.

That was in 1991 and since then Tifway 419 has been the point of much discussion about contaminated or mutated turf fields. And now, unfortunately, even Tifdwarf purity has come into question. In fact, the FGCSA and FTGA are now funding DNA research that will hopefully hasten the return of certified turf to Florida. It will not be a quick fix. It is not a good guy v.s. bad guy problem. It has more to do with returning to a turf certification program, and the DNA testing is just one tool to help us get there.

One of the best outcomes of building a golf course is creating new habitat. In the late stages of grow-in aquatic plants like spike rush and bull rush were estab-

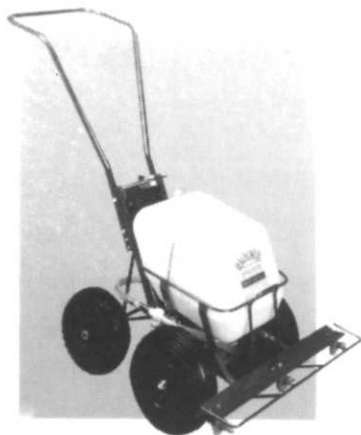
lished along the lake and pond banks to provide cover and habitat for the fish populations that would follow.

It was satisfying to watch small 2 to 3 inch long fry of large mouth bass, bream, and catfish grow into catch and release size so quickly. After the fish came the fishers. Herons, cormorants, ospreys and even eagles. During the first year of operation nine osprey nesting poles were installed to provide homes for the name-sake of Osprey Ridge. This spring, patience (sometimes a rare commodity in golf) paid off as a nesting pair of Ospreys took up residence and started a family on the pole between Osprey Ridge's #7 and Eagle Pine's #15.

The Bonnet Creek Golf Club is a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. Many of the initiatives already taken during original construction will help qualify for full certification.

The Bonnet Creek Golf Club opened its doors in late December 1991. I secretly think, that during the conceptual plan-

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Looking back down #14, Osprey Ridge, a tough par 4.

OSPREY RIDGE



Osprey Ridge #17, a two-tiered challenge.