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From Badlands...

This huge flat bunker on the 2nd hole sports a siphon sump drain system.
Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



to Grasslands

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

wice reclaimed, Grasslands is a perfect example of how a golf course makes great use of once-barren, unproductive land. Years ago the San Gully Mine ranged over the site extracting Polk County's phosphate riches.

After the mine played out, a large portion of the site became a municipal landfill. Today, a rolling 18-hole golf course provides home sites, recreation, relaxation, wildlife habitat, employment and revenue for the community.

'I have always loved the natural look and feel of the Scottish courses, and Grasslands has a lot of that flavor.'

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Oddly enough, it is a mining company that has reclaimed the land and converted it into a viable entity.

The Drummond Company, a coal mining operation out of Jasper, Ala. has ventured into the golf development business in a very significant way. With a love for the game and a desire to diversify its holdings, the Drummond Company owns and operates three golf clubs.

In addition to the Grasslands, there are Rancho La Quinta, which hosted the recent PGA Tour Skins Game, and Old Overton in Birmingham, Ala. designed by Tom Fazio and named Best New Private Club for 1995 by *Golf Digest*.

Grasslands is getting into professional tournament golf by hosting the first Nike Tour event for 1997. The tournament week begins after the Super Bowl and runs from Jan. 30 to Feb. 2.

PGA Tour agronomist Jeff Haley has already made two visits and is pleased with the overall conditioning.

The man responsible for getting it ready is Roy Wilshire, CGCS. Roy has been at the Grasslands for four years and seems very comfortable in his role.

Keep it natural

"I have always loved the natural look and feel of the Scottish courses, and Grasslands has a lot of that flavor," said Wilshire during our December ride through of the course.

Open spaces with only a few trees, the course fits Wilshire's evolving management philosophy.

"I prefer a lean course for conserva-

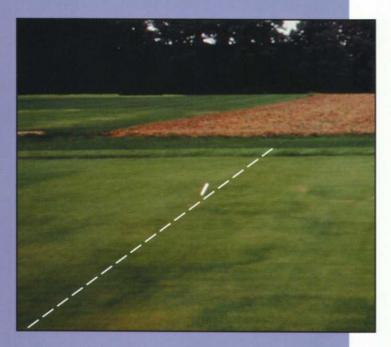
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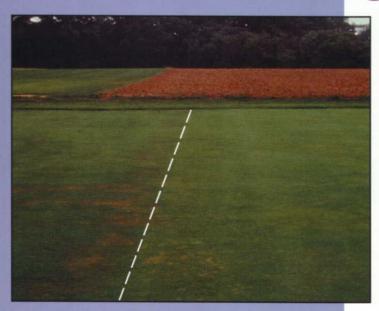
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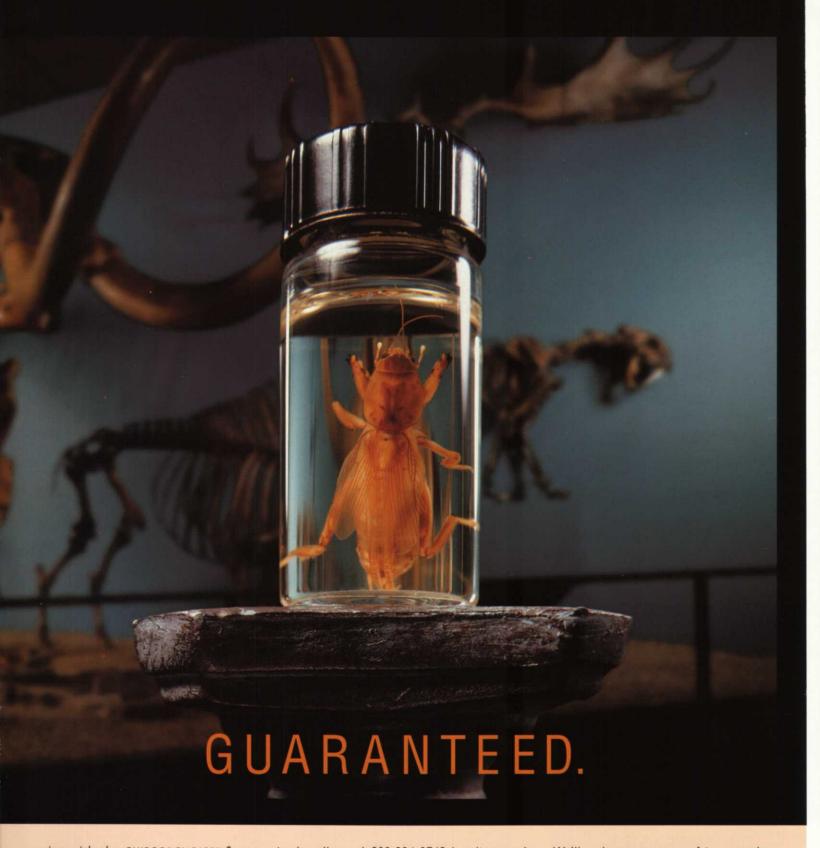


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9819 STATE ROAD 7 = BOYNTON BEACH, FL 33437 (561) 369-7994 = FAX (561) 364-1118 tion purposes, and it is a more natural state for the turf. Keeping it on the leaner side makes it easier to groom. We always supplement for color, but I keep my nitrogen as low as I can for healthy turf," he said

"Through the green, we make five to seven granular applications and only two or three of those are wall-to-wall. The rest are fairways only.

"During favorable weather we can apply two to three pounds of nitrogen with fertigation. Because of the heavy nature of the subsoil, I couldn't rely on a liquid program very much. The summer before last year, there were 60-day periods when we didn't water fairways at all.

Wilshire is just as frugal with fertilizer on his greens.

"I let weather and clippings yield dictate when we fertilize the greens," he said.

"Generally, we only apply six to eight pounds of nitrogen per year. Eight pounds is on the high side and usually means we had a tough transition and I had to push turf recovery in the spring.

"People can get caught up in Stimpmeter readings and green speeds. You need to keep the grass healthy. I will supplement with a foliar spray of 20-20-20 for color, but I try to stretch a nitrogen application as far as I can. When we do fertilize greens, it is at a rate of 0.5 pound to 0.75 pound per 1,000 square feet."

Drainage

As we rode the course, it was obvious that the Grasslands had received a heavy rain from Sunday's cold front passage through the area. Since Roy had mentioned heavy soils earlier, I asked him how the course drained.

"The surface drainage is fantastic," he said. "We can take a thunderstorm deluge and move the water off very rapidly. We do run into management concerns when it rains and stays cloudy for several days.

"The soil reaches field capacity quickly and then we have to be patient and let the conditions dictate what we can do. I have been experimenting with Primo growth regulator to help us through rainy periods to lessen the need to mow as often.

"When the mined-out areas of the course were filled and leveled, a lot of the

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Roy Wilshire, CGCS

- 1. Originally from: Andover, Kansas.
- 2.. Family: Wife Sharon. Children Tiffani (8) and Maci (6)
- **3. Education**: BS in Agriculture with Turf Management emphasis from Kansas State University 1981.
- 4. Employment History: 1993 to present, Superintendent, Grasslands C. C.; 1990-92 Built course in Houston, TX. Also an executive in small management company. 1986-90 Superintendent, Lochinvar G. C., Houston, TX; 1985-86 Superintendent, Elkins Lake C.C., Huntsville, TX; 1982-85 Assist. Supt. Colonial C. C., Ft. Worth, TX. 1974-85 Summer crew member Crestview C. C., Wichita, KS.
- **5. How did you get into the business?** My neighbor was going to work on a golf course. I loved golf, so I went with him. That was the summer of 1974. I knew from that point what profession I wanted to pursue.
- 6. People in or out of the industry who have influenced your life and career. My parents for allowing me the opportunity to attend college. Mr. Tom Leonard, who was truly a wise man. He would share his experiences of the ups and downs of the profession with me or anybody who needed assistance. I watched and listened and learned.
- 7. Goals/Accomplishments: Graduating from college. Becoming a certified superintendent. Being very active in all my Superintendent affiliations. Work philosophy: Utilize all you have been taught. Be consistent in your course set up. Be consistent in dealing with personnel. Mother nature always controls the game.
- **8.** Advice to prospective and new superintendents: Follow the above. Be loyal to your employer and maintain the highest standards of this great profession, and play the game of golf.
- Professional affiliations: CGCS member of GCSAA; FTGA; President of the Ridge Chapter of the Florida GCSA; Past President South Texas GCSA in 1991.
- 10. Hobbies and interests: They have narrowed over the years to golf and attending Daytona and Talladega NASCAR events. Helping fellow superintendent, Ray Cuzzone with his race car. Doing some landscape design work away from the course.

silts and clays from the spoil piles were used. And the back nine — where the landfill area was — is capped with soil with a lot of fines in it so we don't have great percolation.

One unique drainage feature that Roy showed me was the internal subsurface sump drain complex in the large bunker on the second hole.

"This bunker is so large that when the trucks hauled in the sand, they had to get into the bunker and they completely tore up the standard drain field. It would take six or seven hours to pump out this bunker after a heavy rain.

"Dennis Hurley of Turf Drainage of America out of Slidell, La. installed the sump system for us. It works like a water bed siphon. It is a water primed system that uses air to push water. It can even push water up hill. It is expensive, but the payback is there in labor savings and playability. I plan to do three more large fairway bunkers."

Bunker Management

Since Roy was getting ready for the Nike tournament and bunker conditioning is receiving more attention all the time, I asked him about his bunker management methods.

"We do have some steep bunker faces that I check regularly because we have to work them so often after a storm. My philosophy is to keep the sand as thin as possible to keep them firm. We add very little sand to them.

"We primarily have Standard 37M as our primary sand. I am adding a little coarser 37C from time to time for balance. We have so much fine soil from the reclamation that it migrates into the bunkers.

"Eventually, we will have to redo the bunkers. It will be an ongoing process just like the drainage."

'There is an up side to the poor soils though! The heavier soils aren't as friendly to mole crickets so we don't have to spend as much money as some sandy courses to manage them.

"We will apply Oftanol to the fairways and green and tee slopes and surfaces in the spring and then spot treat problem areas as needed. In Texas where I came from, I don't know of anyone who even