

All in a Day's Work.

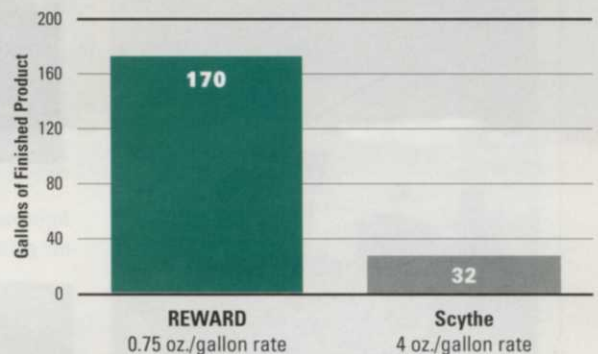


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Snapshots of Laurel Oak

By Joel Jackson



For nearly a decade this covered concrete vault system has been successfully filtering and degrading equipment washdown water and pest control rinsate.



Baugh uses this range finding system to verify distance yardages on sprinkler heads when the tags are worn off; the head is replaced or whenever a member needs reassurance about the accuracy of the yardage.



Information signs begin the communication process at Laurel Oak as soon as you drive through the gate.



The red and white stake marks just one of many patches of Common Bermudagrass infestation on the 419 fairways of the East Course. The source was a contaminated soil stockpile used during construction in 1995.



A lightning detection system and sirens on the course warn golfers and staff when storms are too near.



trainer for a few days and ask the trainer to evaluate his progress,” said Ronnie Ford, superintendent of the West Course. “Our employees tend to stay with us a long time, so they take pride in their work and responsibilities. If we ask them if a rookie is ready to solo, they may ask for another day or two with the employee to make sure they have the routines down pat.

“Many of our new hires come from employee referrals. There is a great incentive for the families to stick together and help each other out. If somebody doesn’t perform satisfactorily in being punctual or producing a good result on the job, there’s a lot of peer pressure on them to shape up because they are help-

Superintendents Dwayne Carter, left, and Ronnie Ford oversee daily operations on the East and West Courses respectively. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

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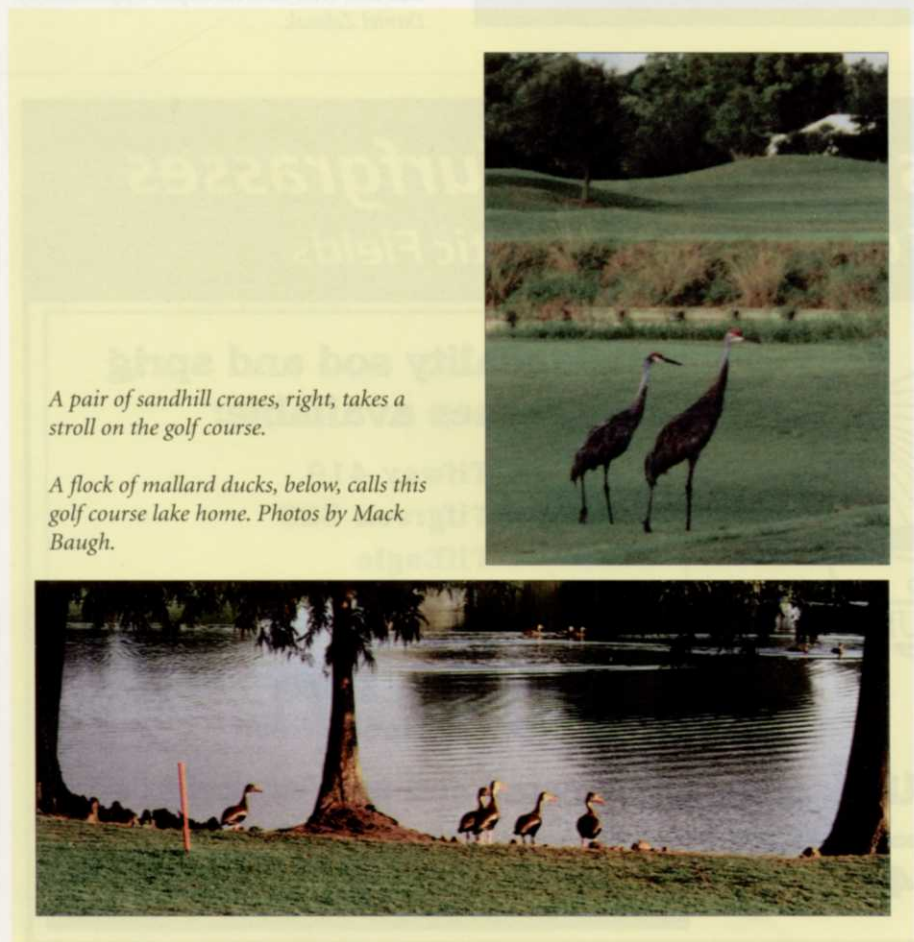
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The early morning fog flirts with sunrise on the 5th hole of the West Course. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



A pair of sandhill cranes, right, takes a stroll on the golf course.

A flock of mallard ducks, below, calls this golf course lake home. Photos by Mack Baugh.

ing with the rent and the groceries.”

Each golf course and landscape superintendent holds weekly meetings with his respective crews, going over safety issues, schedule changes or upcoming events. Each superintendent meets one-on-one with Baugh to discuss anything they need to talk about. Joint meetings are held with all department heads on renovation schedules and equipment-sharing issues. The superintendents run their own courses’ daily operations with little input from Baugh, except for heights of cut. Baugh sets the heights with the head mechanic. If a superintendent wants to make a change up or down, he can discuss his reasons with Baugh.

Baugh prefers not to micro-manage his superintendents.

“I was once asked why I surrounded myself with good people. My answer was, ‘Why wouldn’t you want me to?’

“Managing the grooming details of an 18-hole golf course, monitoring the health of the turf, the playing conditions, monitoring and adjusting the irrigation system and evaluating and coaching the daily performance of your staff is a full-time job. That doesn’t begin to address the administration of the budget of 36 holes



This large wetland area seen from No. 10 West was once a watering hole on a cattle ranch. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

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The par-five 9th and 18th holes on the East Course converge at a large double green complex near the clubhouse. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

and landscape areas, dealing with vendors, meeting with contractors and other managers at the club, filling out reports, responding to members calls and simply coordinating it all so that it runs smoothly.

"If I didn't have capable competent people around me, I'd be up the creek."

Baugh is also proud of the number of superintendents and assistants who have worked with him and have taken head superintendent jobs or moved up to their own operations. The Baugh alumni include Larry Edwards, Bruce Allison, Jerry Monley, Tom Norton, Jim Nyers, Jim Lamb, Al Stichen and, most recently, Keith Einwag, who just left to take over the Lone Palm Country Club in Lakeland. Working with Baugh currently are Ronnie Ford on the West Course and Dwayne Carter who was promoted to Einwag's slot on the East Course.

There is one last area of communications that I found to be unique in all my cover story assignments. It has to do with warning golfers and employees about dangerous storms and lightning. Florida

is the thunderstorm capital of the United States and a band from the central west coast to the central east coast of the state is probably the most active.

The Laurel Oak club has a Toro Electrical Storm Indication Device (ESID) in the pro shop and Baugh has a DTN Weather Center at the maintenance facility. Both systems allow the club to detect and monitor the movement of thunderstorms and lightning in the area. While the club has sirens mounted on the courses' rain shelter/restroom buildings, equipment operators wearing noise protection devices can't always hear the sirens. Laurel Oak takes that proactive stance and goes one step further.

Baugh provides beepers to his employees. He can dial one number and then can enter one of three codes: 5555 - Go to Shelter; 6969 - Go to Work; or 911 - Come to Maintenance.

Baugh explained the logic behind the \$3,500 budget line item. "We have almost 50 people scattered over the project at any given time. They can't all hear the

sirens. Why would we put someone *else* in jeopardy by sending them out into an oncoming storm to find the others and warn them? Using this beeper system and the DTN we can tell them to take shelter and, if it is a small storm, we can give them an all-clear and save the time of running back and forth from the shop. If we have a big storm system coming, we can get them all off the course with one phone call. It makes pretty good sense to me and it shows we value our employees."

Superintendents are fond of telling students and young assistants, "Growing grass is the easy part of the job!" We have spent a lot of time talking about how important effective communication is to Laurel Oak's success. Communication just happens to be that part of the job that addresses perceptions and helps shape the reality that a well-informed membership sees with its own eyes. Don't ever neglect the opportunity to tell your members what's going on at your club.

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Are You The Man With The Plan?

Careful, conscientious budgeting can save you time... and your job!

Those dreaded words come down from the accounting office, "It's budget time!" Are you at a club that just adds in a percentage increase for

inflation based on last year's actuals? Do you work at a club where there "is no budget?"

Or are you working for club that tries to make a profit? There is no better time

than during budget preparation to communicate to your members and owners the value of having a professional golf course superintendent.

Where are those delivery tickets? How much did the mechanic spend on greens mower No. 3 last year? Can I justify replacing the tractor? Am I going to use Polyon, IBDU, or SCU on the greens this year? How big a raise will the staff get this year? How can I make these doctors, lawyers and retired business people understand what it takes to make my department perform to their expectations?

If you don't know the answers to these and a zillion other bean-counting questions, your budget preparations are going to be a real ordeal. At some clubs the budget is the bible. For other clubs its just a set of reasonable guidelines. No matter what your situation, if you read the following articles, you may find some ideas that will make this part of your job a lot easier.

One other tip is to take lots of pictures. Documenting the conditions before and then after a project or the physical condition of a piece of equipment that needs replacing can help laymen visualize what your trying to tell.

JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

The Process of Using Funds Prudently to Achieve Your Goals

No question about it, being a golf course superintendent is different from when I took my first position some 30 years ago. I was trained in agronomy with a M.S. degree and always felt my technical ability would be my principal asset. That used to be true but not as much currently. I would rank staying abreast of new developments in agronomic principals such as plant nutrition, plant pathology, entomology and soil science along with irrigation principles



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as our biggest challenges. We have always had the challenge of maintaining our courses to the satisfaction of a demanding clientele while living within a budget.

The important things I have learned along the way are that being a good planner, organizer, motivator, coordinator, evaluator, purchaser, trainer, business manager and budget preparer are just as important.

Budgeting and management of a budget is the process to achievement of your goals by using funds prudently. A high-quality budget should consist of:

- A written maintenance plan.
- An organizational chart of your department.
- A staffing chart complete with job descriptions.
- A description of each category item in your budget.
- A spreadsheet with category items down the left (X) axis and months across the top (Y axis).
- Capital equipment purchases.
- Capital or special improvement projects.

The completed budget should be bound together along with any product brochures, trade industry articles or any other supporting material that provides understanding of the programs in your budget. These can be in an appendix at the rear. The budget book should provide a table of contents and tabs that make it easier for the reader to refer to each section. I go so far as to personalize each copy with the board member's name on the cover. On the inside cover put your name, address, phone number and

fax number so you can be readily contacted for any questions that might arise.

The purpose of a maintenance plan is to sell your budget to the finance committee or owner. It should be a complete management plan for the golf course.

The plan should define the desired level of quality and needs to include a mission statement. Put together a small committee to help put the plan together. It should consist of a representative from ownership, membership and the golf department.

The maintenance plan becomes your business plan and must have input and commitment from ownership. I have an equity club whose member/owners are represented by a board of directors. My committee is myself, the golf professional, my green chairman and another member of my green committee along with a member of the finance committee.

The plan first and foremost should detail how the golf course is to be maintained and to what level. It should be program-oriented, detailing every program in your budget. Hopefully you can equate budget numbers to this plan. For example, under the chemical-insecticide-use portion, detail the chemicals to be used and the cost of each program. Nematodes, mole crickets, fire ants, cutworms, sod webworms, chinch bugs, etc. Each program should be detailed with cost. Under fertilization, detail each fertilizer program with type of fertilizer and cost. The green program for example should include number of times per week you mow and roll, fertilizer program, fertilizer and supplies needed. How fast does your committee want the greens? The same for tees, fairways and roughs programs. They should be detailed. Carry this on for each category item in the budget including the maintenance shop and landscape.

The value of this plan is that when a budget is being reviewed by those who approve it, they fully understand that when

cutting money from the budget, they are cutting programs. If someone says to the superintendent, for example, "cut your chemical cost." He can lay out his management plan and reply, "Which program do you want to eliminate or cut?" Upper management will find it more difficult to eliminate needed programs rather than just amending a dollar figure. In the process of budget review, the superintendent needs to be seen as an able manager of the club's money.

Organizational charts are not that hard to do and they help those that do not understand your business or how you organize your staff.

The staffing chart should relate to the organizational chart and the business plan. How much staff is needed to carry out the programs in your plan? Include how much each employee is to earn and include overtime and bonuses for each. Also include raises in wages during the year if they are anticipated. Include payroll and workers' compensation taxes and any benefits the club provides. These numbers are then used to back up the payroll line item in your budget.

Have a section in the budget that describes every line item category in the spreadsheet. Go to whatever length you feel is necessary to assure that everyone who looks at your budget understands it completely. Do not forget line items for staff training and your own professional instruction.

Not much needs to be said about a spreadsheet. More often than not, this is what a superintendent calls his budget. If it is, and you have provided no backup, then be prepared for amended dollar figures from those
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