



*Yacht & Country Club of Stuart:*

# Waterways and Fairways

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

**B**ounded by highway A1A and the St. Lucie River, the Yacht and Country Club of Stuart lies due west of the St. Lucie Inlet on Florida's southeast Treasure Coast. Built in 1967 as part of a real estate venture, the Y&CC is reported to be the oldest private country club in Martin County.

When the Y&CC debuted three decades ago, it was the prime location in the fishing village of Stuart, touted as the "Sailfish Capital of the World." Y&CC



*One of many success stories at the Y&CC of Stuart is the use of aquatic plantings, like these on the 9th hole, to improve water quality and attract wildlife. Photo by Daniel Zelazek*



*Yacht & Country Club's clubhouse seen from the 10th tee. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

residents either lived on fairways or on waterways just a short drive or cruise from the Intracoastal Waterway and Atlantic Ocean. Thirty-three years later the club has matured and taken advantage of modern golf design and maintenance technology to keep its playing conditions up to par for its members and competitive with the booming golf market in the area.

The Y&CC has been modernizing the course in earnest since 1990 when it commissioned golf course architect Charles Ankrum to redesign the original Charles Marting layout which opened in the late sixties. One year later superintendent Craig Weyandt was hired in his first superintendent's position and every year since then he has supervised the club's long-range plan of upgrading the facilities.

"I don't want to call it a work in

## Craig Weyandt

**Originally from:** Middleburg. Family: wife Teri; sons Travis (15) and Connor (5).

**Education:** 1983 - Middleburg H.S.; 1988 - Lake City Community College, A.S., golf course operations.

**Employment history:** 1991 to present, superintendent, Y&CC Stuart; 1989-91 assistant superintendent, Harbour Ridge Y&CC, Golden Marsh Course; 1989 assistant superintendent, Bokaire GC; 1988-89 assistant superintendent Westchester G&CC (through construction, grow-in and opening).

**Professional affiliations:** president Treasure Coast GCSA 1998-99; external vice president TCGCSA 1997-00; GCSAA; FGCSA; FTGA; USGA; Irrigation Assn.; Lawn Maintenance Assn.; Florida Native Plant Society.

**Mentors:** My father (a career Navy man) first got me cutting grass when I was in the fifth grade. I think that he was empowering me. He showed a lot of trust in me and my abilities which has given me the confidence to be able to do anything I put my mind to. Jim Rowland (now at Lake Wales CC) was the first superintendent that I ever worked for. Jim gave me my first taste of working on a golf course. Another superintendent that had a way of making me want to work hard for him was Willie Townsend at the Westchester

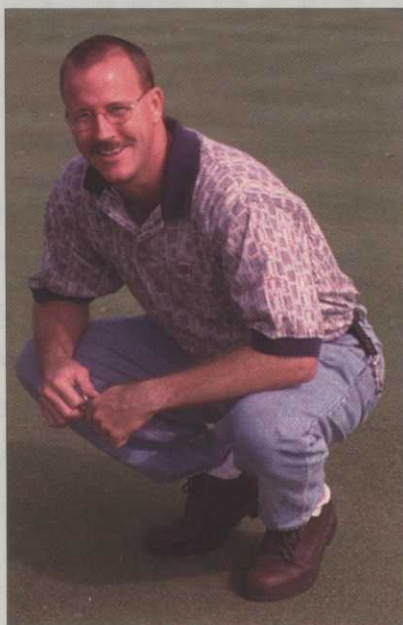
C.C. in Boynton Beach. This was my first job out of college and I have never worked harder in my life. I still tell people today that I would get to work at 5:30 a.m. and Willie would ask what I am doing coming in late. I think I have taken a little from each of the superintendents that I have worked for to give me the abilities that I have today. I thank them all, especially my father for giving me the confidence, discipline, and love that he showed me growing up.

**Goals:** My goal is to become the best golf course superintendent that I can be.

**Advice:** Never stop learning, progressing, and striving to be better in all facets of your life. Can you ever give too much, do too much? I don't think so. Work hard and play even harder!

**Philosophy:** Work is not a four letter word for me unless you call it love. Being a superintendent is not work...it's something I do, it's who I am. This may sound corny but I think other superintendents understand what I am saying. I don't get to work at 5:30 to 5:45 a.m. because I have to, it's because I want to. I like greeting people every day with a smile. I remember someone saying to me that confidence is contagious.

**Hobbies and interests** - Golf, of course! Jeeping, racquet ball, high-power rocketry, and spending time with the family.



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### Continual Modernization

In 1999 the Y&CC maintenance staff installed a new irrigation system, right. After the main line and primary lateral lines were installed, each green complex was repiped and reconnected to the system in one day.

In 1997 the 30-year-old ormond bermudagrass fairways on the back nine were converted to Tifway 419. The front nine was done in 1998. Photos by Craig Weyandt.



*Five years ago we installed a VFD pump station which increased our watering efficiency 225%. The savings in electricity alone will pay back the cost of the pump station in another couple of years.*

progress because the club has a rich history and tradition of excellence,” said Weyandt who began his tenure at the Y&CC in 1991, “but we have basically been doing some sort of major improvement project every year to improve either the playing conditions or the infrastructure.

“Probably the biggest project we undertook was the complete overhaul of the irrigation system. Like so many older systems, over the years the integrity and capacity of the system was compromised with too many add-on heads and zones. Our line pressure and coverage was inadequate and it was hard to explain to members why we had dry spots and frog-eye patterns around the irrigation heads.”

“Five years ago we installed a VFD pump station which increased our watering efficiency 225%. The savings in electricity alone will pay back the cost of the pump station in another couple of years. We now have a Rain Bird Cirrus control system and we are learning daily how to tweak the system to maximize our irrigation efficiency even more. The past two years, we completely repiped the entire golf course to complete the project. Except for the mainline installation on 12 holes, we did all the work in-house.”

In-house projects have been the theme at Y&CC. In addition to the irrigation system, Weyandt and his staff have built a second practice tee at the rear of the driving range and they have enlarged



## Craig's Super Tips

- 1. Recycling:** We started with aluminum cans and now we recycle everything including the resident's newspapers and cardboard. We also recycle plastic, batteries and old oil. In fact by switching from a 6-yard dumpster to a 2-yard cardboard and a 4-yard general container, we save almost \$100 per month in waste management fees.
- 2. Fire Ant Flags:** A few years ago I found a marker flag company that made irrigation flags with a plastic shaft instead of wire. They aren't messy like the rusty wire flags and they don't wrap around mower reels. I worked with company and we came up with a fire ant logo for the flag part. Now the members use them to mark fire ant mounds. We treat the mound and then pull the flags a few days later when the mound is no longer active.
- 3. Hydrosprigging:** We did some hydrosprigging to grass one of our construction projects. We had a 1.5 inch rainfall the next day with zero sprig wash. I'd recommend people give this method a try.



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*46 manicured bunkers influence tee shots and guard green's approaches on the 1990 Charles Ankrom redesign of the course. Hole #11 Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

existing tees and built additional tees on the course to offer more teeing ground options to accommodate the various skill levels of the members.

Weyandt and crew also spent two years (1997-98) regrassing the fairways, taking one nine at a time. The object was to replace the old original ormond bermudagrass fairways with Tifway 419. After the existing grass was sprayed out and stripped off, a large BOMAG renovator/tiller was used to churn up the soil profile prior to sprigging.

One of Weyandt's favorite success stories is the improvement to the course's five ponds. "The ponds are only 4-5 feet deep. I can remember when we used to line up the crew shoulder to shoulder once a year and wade across the pond harvesting the algae to clean up the ponds. Since then we have planted aquatic plants

and stocked the ponds with fish. The filtering effect of the plants along with oxygen production are working so well I can't remember the last time we had an algae bloom.

"We also have a wide variety of waterfowl that live and forage in the ponds. We have created a positive, self-sustaining system and that makes me proud."

In keeping with naturalizing the water hazards, Weyandt also has designs on the out-of-play and deep rough areas on the course.

"One of the best features on the course is our trees. We have some beautiful old oaks and a variety of other species that have matured with the course over the years.

"One thing we all have learned is that trees and turf don't go together. The shade and root competition tend to thin

out the turf and make less than desirable playing conditions.

"We are addressing that problem in two ways.

"First, wherever possible we are creating native or natural areas especially in the out-of-play and dense shady areas in the roughs. We lay down pine straw to reduce weed growth and provide a good clean look. By creating these areas we lower maintenance costs by reducing the amount of fertilizer and pesticides needed to groom the weaker turf in those marginal areas.

"Around tees and greens where shade can be a real problem we try to keep the trees trimmed to minimize the impact on the greens."

To accomplish all this project work and also maintain excellent playing conditions on the course, Weyandt must



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## The Yacht & Country Club of Stuart

**Location:** Stuart (Sailfish capital of the world)

**Ownership:** Membership; private country club, 18 holes, course built in 1967, members took over ownership from developer in 1969.

**Yardage:** 6,466 yards. Par 71. Course Rating/Slope Rating 71.2/125.

**Designed by** Charles P. Marting. Redesigned in 1990 by Charles Ankrom  
Rebuilding done by Central Florida Turf.

**Management team:** General Manager Michael L. Kaplan, C.C.M.; Club President James A. Hogan; Golf Professional Mike McNeal; Greens Chairman Walter Palmer.

**Total acreage under maintenance:** 120 Acres

**Greens:** Average size: 4,500; total 3 acres; turf - It's called tifdwarf but...

**Height of cut:** .150 to .170 winter and .160 to .180 summer; overseed: normally 8 lbs./1000 with Seaside bent and Poa trivialis (10% bent-90% Poa); green speed goal: 7.5 to 8.5 in the season.

**Tees:** 2-1/2 acres of 419 bermuda; HOC .500; overseeded with perennial rye @ 10 lbs/1000.

**Fairways:** 28 acres of 419 bermuda; HOC .500 summer and .750 winter; "Not overseeded, yet! We seeded one fairway this year to experiment and evaluate."

**Bunkers:** 46 bunkers with No. 200 sand. Mechanically raked with John Deere rake with standard tines/flaps

**Water/Ponds:** 5 ponds covering about 5 acres; a canal runs through the middle of the property. In 1992 the ponds were aquascaped and stocked with glass shrimp, channel catfish, gambusia (sp.) and large mouth bass. The ponds were devoid of plant material before this. The idea was to create a self-sustaining ecosystem in the lakes. We used to have algae blooms, but its been so long ago that it's hard to remember. The plants have taken off. The water has cleared up. Wading birds now flock to the ponds. It's great.

**Major Renovations/Ongoing Projects:** 1993-Installed VFD controller at pump station (Flowtronex/PSI) 225% increase in efficiency; 1994 Added a set of tees to the golf course (had three, now have four) and built several new tees to compensate for yardage differences; 1995 Installed new field satellites for irrigation system; 1997 & 1998 regrassed fairways (In-house. Nine holes each year) removing old Ormond bermudagrass and replanting with Tifway 419; 1997 built additional practice tee at the rear of the driving range; 1998-99 Installed new irrigation system (95% in house —12 holes of main lines installed by contractor, the rest done in-house)

**Irrigation:** Flowtronex/PSI pumping station, drawing from three deep wells. Controller is Rain Bird Cirrus central (wireless) with Par-Link boxes in the field. Heads are Rainbird 900 and 950's; fertigation system used for liquid fertilizer in winter and wetting agents all year.

**Staff:** 18 total including superintendent; 15 for golf course and 3 for landscape. Average weekly hours 40 straight, 3 hours overtime; assistant supt., Jack Hester; head mechanic, Ken Kolinski; plant protectant specialist, Andy Gulbrandsen; irrigation specialist Dan McKeag; landscape supervisor, Roberto Gomez.

*I want my employees to truly enjoy working here. Life is too short and there are too many opportunities out there for anyone to be trapped in a job they don't like. Every couple of months I will ask my staff how things are going and if they're happy.*

rely on his staff of 18 to perform at a high level of efficiency.

Three of his staff are dedicated primarily to landscape duties which include the maintenance of the clubhouse grounds, the front and back entrance gates, two to three miles of roadways, the tennis club grounds and croquet court. Weyandt says training is the key to getting productivity.

"Either my assistant Jack Hester or myself do the actual training. That way I know that new crew members have been shown how and what I want done. Crew members can learn from older employees, but everyone develops his own style and I want them to see and hear how I want it done. I use a simple three-step approach to training:

"First I tell them what needs to be done and why.

"Second I show or demonstrate the task.

"Third I watch them do it successfully to my satisfaction.

"I like and use the many equipment training videos that are now available. They're especially good at giving safety information."

In addition to task training, Weyandt takes a personal interest in his staff.

"I want my employees to truly enjoy working here. Life is too short and there