

## If You're Looking



Steep rocky shorelines like No. 18 West make grooming lake banks more time consuming. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

downtown Boca Raton. The 1700-unit community of condominiums and villas borders the 36 holes of the East and West courses, which, in most cases, are the back yards for the residents.

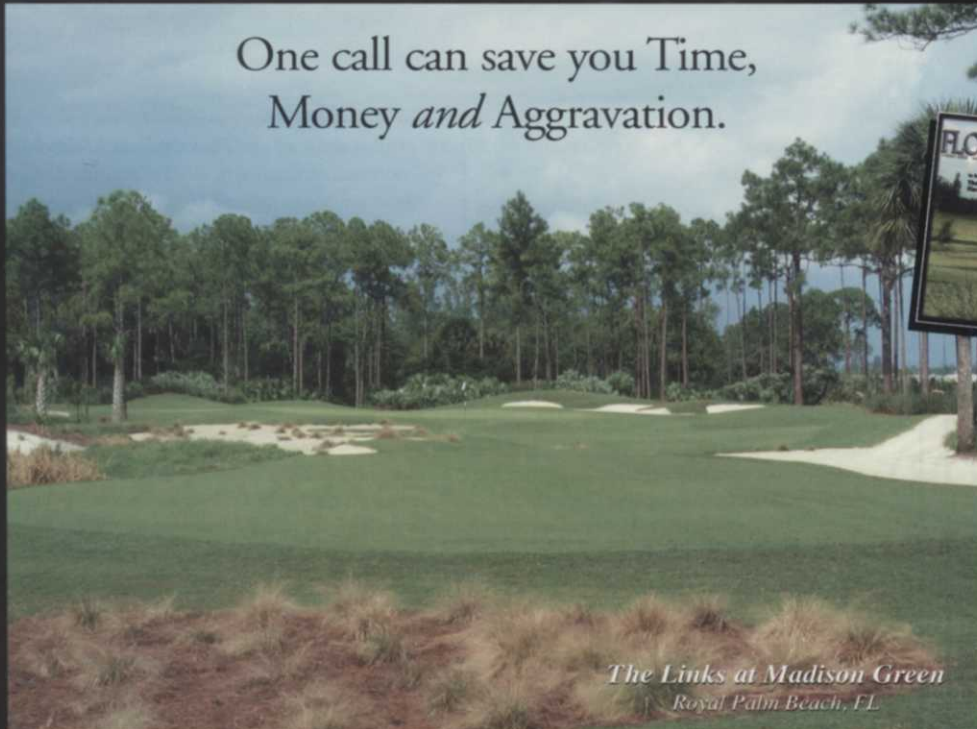
So, in addition to grooming the courses for the golf members, Court and staff also attend to the cultivation and manicuring of the views of the garden setting that has been created over the years. Court says, "The members and residents love color and we try to provide a variety of perennial shrubs and flowering trees to give them what they want. We've even got impatiens growing out of our palm trees."

Court shows off beds of exotic plants like tropical snowball, Yang-Yang, and golden dew-drops to make his point. He also noted that the master gardner with the Palm Beach County Extension Office has marveled at the success Court has had with his colorful landscaping program. Court says luck has a lot to do with it.

The maintenance department is also responsible for removing invasive plants like Australian pine, melaluca, and Brazilian pepper from the county conservation areas to revive the populations of native slash pine and cypress trees. Low-growing saw palmetto plants are introduced to fill in the gaps to prevent re-emergence of the invasive plants. A side benefit to this ongoing program is to allow more air movement and sunlight to penetrate to the turf areas, making maintenance a little easier.

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*Bullrush and bulkhead on No. 6 West are just two of the ongoing projects at Boca Lago. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*



*The lake guarding No. 4 East is just part of the 50 acres of lakes at Boca Lago. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.*

Because it is a residential setting, trees and shade are inevitable. Court says one of the biggest challenges is managing turf around Ficus trees. "The Ficus is a favorite South Florida tree, but when they get big, the shade is so dense, the grass just won't grow. In the shadier areas we have been experimenting with several varieties of zoysiagrass. Over the past six years we've planted Cashmere, El Toro and Greg Norman zoysia. So far Cashmere has worked the best for us."

Court is now experiencing another turf change. In 2000, the push-up East Course greens were replanted with TifEagle. He is looking at the ultradwarf management research being done by Dr. John Cisar on the FGCSA's Otto Schmeisser Research Green in Ft. Lauderdale for guidance, along with calls to his peers with TifEagle, to develop a site-specific management program for his new greens. The greens renovation project also included the rehabilitation of 52 greenside bunkers with drainage, reshaping and the addition of new sand. Court hopes the West Course greens will get a facelift in the near future.

Meanwhile Court and company also renovate and rebuild four to six tee complexes each year. "We are trying to get away from the old runway or loaf-of-bread style tee to create multiple teeing areas to compliment the various handicap groups of the members. When we rebuild a tee complex, we also install a variety of native and ornamental plants to provide contrast, interest and color for the enjoyment of the members."

Court has been trying to introduce as many colorful native perennials as possible and reduce the number of formal annual plants. "With the recent drought cycle and water restrictions, it is imperative we look at more practical plantings that make more sense environmentally as well as economically."

Making sense environmentally has been on Court's mind since Boca Lago joined the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ASCP) in 1993. Court says, "We have installed 33 nesting boxes on the course over the years, but the biggest boost to wildlife has been all these native and perennial plantings we have been doing. The plants pro-

vide cover and the blooms are attracting a wide variety of butterflies and the birds love all the berries and seeds on the plants. Our members and staff also enjoy recreational fishing in the lakes stocked with largemouth bass, peacock bass and bream.

As the new president of the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association, Court says he would like to use his position to encourage more Florida golf courses to get involved in the ACSF. "Golf courses take a lot of unwarranted shots in the media. We need to *show* not just *tell* our side of the story. The fact that Audubon International, an environmentally focused organization, is willing to work with the golf industry to provide expertise on how we can be more environmentally sound is a no-brainer to me. We have around 260 courses in Florida as members of the ACSF, and of those only 59 are certified Audubon Sanctuaries. We can do better. We need to do better. It's important that we document and demonstrate that we are indeed good stewards of the environment. This program is a very user-friendly way to accomplish that goal."

As Court and his staff go about the business of maintaining the Boca Lago "Garden of Golf," they must deal with the site-specific challenges that come with every golf course. One of those challenges is dealing with the limestone bedrock near the surface. Court says, "Our job is to accommodate the members and provide good playing conditions. To do that we have to add drainage lines and repair or modify the irrigation system, these are routine jobs made more difficult by having to trench through the rock. It's time consuming and tough on the men and equipment. With rock outcrops near the surface, the turfgrass roots don't have much soil to grow in to maintain a good healthy stand of turf."

Another disadvantage of the rocky ground is the difficulty in maintaining the lake banks. Court says, "Practically all our lake banks have to be trimmed by hand since they are not smoothly tapered slopes. The craggy rough look due to the rock outcrops is picturesque, but it is also labor intensive. Since there is not much soil along the lake edges, it has been difficult to establish as much aquatic shoreline vegetation as I would like. But you have to work with what nature and the site gives you. Overall, I think we do a pretty good job."

With all the focus on the landscape to complement the golf experience, Court is blessed

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with a veteran staff that knows what's expected and how to get it down efficiently. For example, the three full-time and one part-time equipment technicians have 59 years of experience among them, which is a huge plus in meeting the demands placed on equipment that is used virtually year round in this subtropical environment. "When former head equipment technician Danny DeStephano wanted to semi-retire, he went to work part time for us maintaining the mower reels," Court said.

The two spray technicians are also veterans, which takes a load off Court's mind as he goes about his management duties. "Our head tech is Armand Ausserlechner, who has been here for eight years, but we were also lucky to have Vince Latour join the staff. Vince has 35 years in the business and was formerly the assistant superintendent at Broken Sound GC." Court says he adheres to IPM principles and stresses spot treatment applications versus wall-to-wall treatments.

He added, "Our biggest pest-control challenges are nematodes, fairy ring and tropical signalgrass. Pro-Star seems to work on the fairy rings but the nematodes and signalgrass can give us fits. I had tried to manage the nematodes with spot treatments of the worst areas for the past six or seven years, but we had to do a large-scale Nematicur treatment last year to get them under control again. We also experimented with Curfew injection on the greens. I will be interested to see how Dr. Crow's alternative nematicide research progresses now that

EPA has ordered the phase out of Nematicur. The signalgrass is a case of perseverance with follow-up applications of MSMA and Sencor. It's been tough during the drought cycle because the heat hindered the turf recovery."

To communicate with his crew Court says, "I like to spend 95 percent of my time out on the course, keeping my hand in, and checking with our crew members in person to see how they're doing personally and on the job. I am fortunate to have my wife Janet as my administrative assistant, so the lines of communication are open 24/7. Plus the club provides superintendent housing on site, so it's convenient to catch up on paper work when I have to. We have bimonthly staff meetings on safety issues. I use Todd Miller's company, Risk Compliance Inc., for presentations on Hazard Communications and safety issues. Todd's service keeps us up to date and in compliance with OSHA and Department of Labor requirements.

"We check in daily with the pro shop to review weather, course and traffic control conditions. Traffic control is very important to managing wear and tear on the turf. Our layout is relatively narrow being surrounded by residences, so carts have limited options on where they can drive. I adopted a traffic management plan from a presentation by James Moncrief of the USGA Green Section. Monty's plan established four traffic conditions which can be posted at the first and 10th tees. Condition 1: Driving on fairways permitted.

Condition 2: Use 90 Degree Rule. Condition 3: Keep Carts in Roughs. Condition 4: Cart Paths Only. I'm happy to say most of the members comply and do their part to help minimize cart damage."

Court likes to check the playing conditions for himself by playing his own courses three times a month, usually on Saturdays. He sees the course Monday through Friday from the maintenance viewpoint, and the golf round helps him appreciate the player's viewpoint. On the fourth Saturday, he tries to play another comparable course in the area to see how his peers are doing things. Court says these outings give him a chance to get new ideas instead of focusing on the punch list of things to do at his own course.

That punch list includes closing nine holes a day Monday through Thursday on a rotating basis during the summer months, assuming there are no special events booked. This schedule allows the maintenance staff to perform the necessary grooming that comes with new TifEagle greens. Court administers frequent light top dressing applications to deal with the aggressive thatch production of the new grass. Like others learning how to manage the new variety, Court is not overseeding the TifEagle greens and noted its relatively quick green-up after a cold snap. However, shady areas can still be a problem for any grass, so Court maintains a 4,000 square foot nursery green split 50-50 with Tifdwarf and TifEagle for the inevitable thin spot repairs.

Back in 1992, Hurricane Andrew pro-



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vided some unwanted shade relief when it took down 70 trees on the property when it made landfall some 70 miles to the south. Boca Lago's recovery was relatively easy compared to the devastation in south Miami. Court was proud to be part of the club's relief effort for the storm victims. Court said,

"A group of volunteers gathered up water and supplies and took them down and distributed them to those in need. We returned at Christmas and brought presents for the kids in the elementary schools." Boca Lago is a good neighbor year round as it provides access for golf team practice for Olympic

Heights High School, Florida Atlantic University and Lynn University and hosts a variety of charity fundraisers.

From green space to good neighbor, Boca Lago C.C. is an example that urban golf courses can be very definite assets to a community

## David Court, CGCS



David Court, CGCS. Photo by Joel Jackson.

**Originally from:** Philadelphia, Pa., moved to Plantation at age 9.

**Family:** Married to Janet, two sons: Tibe (30) and Christopher (27).

**Education:** AS degrees from Lake City and Broward Community colleges.

**Employment history:** 1972-76, crew member and

OJT student at Ft. Lauderdale CC, Colony West CC and Inverrary CC. 1977-79 assistant superintendent Presidents CC. 1979-81 superintendent Colony West CC. 1981 to present director of grounds and greens Boca Lago CC.

**Professional affiliation and awards:** Palm Beach GCSA - all offices, two terms. Chapter president in 1988 and 2000. External VP for three years. FGCSA Education chairman 1992-95. Rotating through FGCSA officer positions since 2000.

**Mentors:** My parents get the top vote along with some key superintendents. My dad was a doctor. He was a great example of someone who was dedicated to his profession. As members of the Ft. Lauderdale CC, our family was a regular foursome, which allowed my brothers and me the opportunity to learn the game of golf.

**Accomplishments:** I've been a certified superintendent for 12 years and employed at Boca Lago for 21 years as of September, and I love being able to say it's been many good years of relationships with members and staff.

**Advice for aspiring superintendents:** Don't be in too big a hurry to become a superintendent. Get as

much different experience as you can. I have no regrets, but my first position at the age of 24 may have been a bit early as I look back now.

**Memorable moments:** Playing in the John Deere Classic Pro-Am two years ago with my general manager Gene Paul Stifter and pro golfer Barry "The Cheese" Cheeseman. Although it was a small part of the overall event, it was still exciting being "inside the ropes." I birdied the first hole along with the pro. We played with fellow Florida GCSA members Bob Klitz and Alan Weitzel from South Florida. Bob wrote about our escapades in the 2001 *Florida Green* winter issue. Gene Paul has a way with people and we really had a great time. I also got to play in the LPGA 50th Anniversary Founders Tournament held at the Palm Beach Par 3 course with LPGA pro Shirley Furlong and actor Jamie Farr (Klinger from the hit TV show M.A.S.H.). I helped represent the GCSAA at the previous night's banquet along with CEO Steve Mona, Past President George Renault and Darren Davis. I went without my wife and I've been taking a beating for that boo-boo ever since. I won't make that mistake again!

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## Boca Lago Country Club



*Boca Lago Country Club*

**Location:** Boca Raton

**Ownership:** Member Owned

**Playing policy:** Private. 36 holes: East Course 6,454 yards, par 72; West Course 6,000 yards, par 70.

**Designed by:** Bruce Devlin and Robert Von Hagge; opened in 1974.

**Management:** Club Manager Gene Paul Stifter, COO; Club President Harry Epstein; Green Chairman Harold Sattenspiel; Head Golf Professional Mike McLellan; Director of Grounds & Greens David Court, CGCS.

**Major Renovations/Ongoing Projects:** In 2000 renovated East Course greens and bunkers.

Replaced Tifdwarf putting surfaces with TifEagle. Push-up greens. So far so good.

**Total acreage under maintenance:** 210 acres turf

**Greens: East:** avg. 6500 sq. ft. - 3.5 acres. Turf type: TifEagle. HOC 0.125 - 0.140; Stimpmeter: 9 - 9.5; no overseeding. **West:** avg. 5000 sq. ft. - 2.5 acres. Turf type: Tifdwarf. HOC 0.150 - 0.180; Stimpmeter: 8 - 8.5. overseeding: *Poa trivialis* @ 18 lbs/1000 sq. ft.

**Tees:** 5 acres total of Tifway 419 bermudagrass; HOC 0.375 - 0.5; overseeding: *Poa trivialis* @ 20 lbs/1000 sq. ft.

**Fairways:** 50 acres total of Tifway 419 bermudagrass; HOC 0.5; overseeding: *Lolium perenne* @ 400 lbs/acre

**Roughs:** 130 acres total. Tifway 419 bermudagrass; HOC 1.75; overseeding: None

**Grounds:** St. Augustine turf and shrubs and annuals around clubhouse and tennis club grounds.

**Bunkers:** 110 bunkers with FSS 100 size sand. Mechanically rake all w/ Toro Sand Pro 2000 with standard tines and flaps and brush finish.

**Natural areas:** 20 acres of preserved slash pine and cypress areas. On a 10-year plan to eliminate invasive Brazilian peppers and melaluccas.

**Waterways/Lakes:** 50 acres. Maintained by outside contractor. Well stocked with triploid grass carp and largemouth and peacock bass and bream.

**Irrigation:** Surface water from SFWMD L-47 Canal. Equipment: Converted to Rain Bird Maxi controls in 1993, upgraded to Nimbus II system in 2002. Hydraulic system with mostly Toro 690 heads. Fertigation capability.

**Total staff including superintendent:** 35 full time and 4 part time working 40 hours straight time. We have had 9 OJT students work for us. It is getting harder to entice them lately. We can't afford to provide housing for them.

**Leadership:** Superintendent Art Helm. Assistant Superintendent Chris McNellis. Head Equipment Technician Brian Schrider with assistants Edmond Luchner and Luis Ubarry and former Head Technician Danny DeStefano now a part timer in

charge of reel maintenance. Pest Control Technicians Amand Ausserlechner and Vince LaTour. Irrigation Technician Nelson Ramos. Office Manager Janet Court

**Communications:** Monthly safety meetings with the staff. The crew knows that I like to be involved daily with a "hands-on" management style so I'm out there with them all the time for one-on-one time as needed.

**Unusual/Interesting notes:** Our tennis director, Len Simard, is the past president of the Florida US Professional Tennis Association and Mike McLellan, our golf director, is the current president of the South Florida PGA chapter. (And now David is the president of the FGCSA.)

**IPM programs/Wildlife:** We definitely follow an IPM program. Spot treating problem areas only is the practice of choice. We make no blanket applications of pesticides. For being a golf course in a densely populated area surrounded by condos, villas and townhouses, our courses are great for wildlife. Along with occasional alligator sightings, we have fox, raccoon and opossum. Our bird-watching list includes: anhinga, blue heron, blue jay, cardinal, cormorant, ducks, egrets, green heron, limpkin, mockingbird, osprey, purple martin, warblers, woodpeckers, wood stork and wrens. We also have freshwater game fish stocked in our lakes.



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## Fun Facts



David and Cosmo Kramer. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Here are some things you might not know about our cover story superintendent.

1. **Car:** 2002 Jeep Cherokee
2. **The last good movie I saw:** A Beautiful Mind
3. **I stay home to watch:** Good movies, Seinfeld and Everybody Loves Raymond
4. **The book I've been reading:** Hannibal
5. **Favorite meal:** Jack Daniels Manhattan up, Caesar salad, veal chop, sweet potato, asparagus and dessert or almost anything Italian.
6. **Favorite performers:** Barry Manilow & Paul McCartney. I saw both in concerts recently.
7. **Prized possession:** My dog, Cosmo Kramer, a Golden Retriever/Chow mix.
8. **Personal heroes:** My father.
9. **Nobody knows that I:** Like to watch old TV shows - Father Knows Best, The Three Stooges and Leave It to Beaver.
10. **I'm better than anyone else when it comes to:** Three putting.
11. **If I could do it over:** I'd make better grades in high school.
12. **I'd give anything to meet:** Arnold Palmer and Tiger Woods.
13. **My fantasy is:** Win the lottery, travel and play golf.
14. **The one thing I can't stand:** Drivers on the road who think they are the only thing that matters.
15. **If I could change one thing about myself:** I'd be better organized.
16. **My most irrational act:** Driving 140 mph to see how fast my Dad's Plymouth GTX would go.
17. **The words that best describe me:** Conservative, rational.



There's 59 years of experience in the Boca Lago equipment shop. From left: Luis Ubarry, equipment technician (15 years); Edmond Luckner, reel technician (8 years); Brian Schrider, head equipment technician (12 years); Daniel DeStefano, "retired" head technician (22 years). Photo by David Court, CGCS.





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There's been a lot of discussion over the job title of golf course superintendent, greenkeeper, turf manager or director of grounds. What best describes the role and responsibilities of the position? Well, it doesn't stop there. The professionals who keep the golf course equipment running so superintendents can apply all that agronomic wizardry are called mechanics, equipment technicians, equipment managers or shop managers. Whatever the title, you may be the head of the outfit but they are your right hand. There are several equipment technician associations around the state seeking to organize and professionalize the position. Check out the following articles for a look into the role of the equipment manager.

Joel Jackson

## HAWK'S NEST

### Neatness Counts... From Procedures to Record-Keeping

By Tom Trammel, CGCS

Hawk's Nest is an 18-hole, private golf course in Vero Beach with a maintenance staff of 23. Head mechanic Bruce Raitzel has one full-time assistant, Jacob Watson, and occasionally a part-timer as a second helper. Raitzel, a Lake City CC turf equipment management grad, is in his 13th year as head mechanic, starting his fifth year at Hawk's Nest. He is recognized as one of the leaders in his field.

Daily operations for the upcoming week are on a master schedule board located in the break room. Our goal is to stay as balanced as possible with

mechanic and crew schedules so that it keeps them all in a forward-moving focus.

The shop is swept daily and is kept neat; it's accessed only by the assistant and head mechanic. It is a separate building thus there is no need for staff members to enter. All shop tools are bought and owned by the club. A separate tool box of lesser-value, miscellaneous tools is kept for the rest of the staff.

All the carts and maintenance

equipment items have the operators' names printed on them, making each operator responsible to clean and check the oil on his assigned equipment. A board in the break room allows operators to write down any



Top quality and specialized tools are bought and owned by Hawk's Nest. Photo by Tom Trammel.

issues and problems with the equipment if the mechanics are not available in the shop or if a problem occurs falls over a weekend. For emergencies there is with a radio to call the mechanics if they are out in the field.

All equipment costs, expenses and servicing records are accounted for on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The head mechanic has a monthly maintenance and repair budget allotment and performs his own purchasing and invoicing through the golf course office manager.

The head mechanic is responsible for lubricating all pieces of equipment that are driven on the greens. Operators of rough-, slope- and fairway-mowing equipment lubricate their units daily. Time is allocated at the end of the day for each operator to do the servicing and detailed cleaning. The operators are required to report any equipment issues or safety problems to the head mechanic as soon after it occurs as possible.

The superintendent and head mechanic meet at least once a week formally to go over the existing and future status of mowing heights, cultural practices, ideas, needed services and operator performance. Greens mower reels are ground weekly, tee mowers biweekly, slope and rough mowers three times a year. Hydraulic hoses are typically changed out

Hawk's Nest head mechanic David Raitzel has been at Hawk's Nest for five years. David is a graduate of the Lake City Community College golf operations turf equipment management program. Photo by Tom Trammel.