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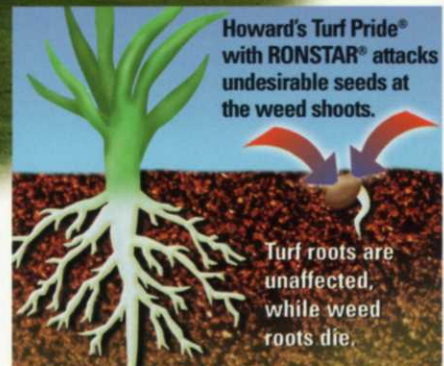
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help celebrate the association's finale to its 75th anniversary.

GCSAA had a great 75th Anniversary Pavilion set up on the trade show floor which displayed course-logoed flags and golf balls from around the world. A replica of the bronze Old Tom statue by Nebraska superintendent Brad Pearson held court in a vignette symbolizing his place of honor at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. One replica of the statue will be placed at the World Golf Village in St. Augustine and another is being donated to the golf museum at the Old Course in St. Andrews, Scotland. There was a sampling of antique golf course equipment from the Historical Preservation Collection on display to remind all of us how far our profession has advanced over the years. Photos, articles and videos gave visitors a time-line of progress from the association's humble beginnings on Sept. 13, 1926 in Toledo, Ohio.

Besides playing host chapter to the finale of the 75th anniversary, FGCSA members participated in the conference in a significant way. President Geoff Coggan, CGCS, MG, welcomed attendees with at the opening session with a brief overview of the Florida GCSA and its goals and mission. Three Florida superintendents won honors in the GCSAA/Golf Digest Environmental Leaders in Golf Awards: William Davidson, Jr., Colliers Reserve; John Kopack, The Legacy Club at Alaqu Lakes; Jeff Klontz, Country Club of Florida and Kyle Sweet, The Sanctuary.

Kevin Cavanaugh from The Plantation at Ponte Vedra gave a presentation on personal public relations and communications in the Innovative Superintendents I session, and Tim Hiers, CGCS of Old Colliers did double duty with a presentation in a *Golf Course Management* session on choosing paspalum turf and a presentation in the USGA Green Section session on building a golf course in an environmentally sensitive area.

Three FGCSA members finished in the Top 10 in the low gross division in the GCSAA Golf Championship held at the World Golf Village and Palm Coast, Mark Henderson, second; Tyler Warner, eighth; and Chris Cartin, tied for tenth. The Florida Team No. 1 of Chris Cartin, Mark Henderson, Mark Hopkins and Joe Ondo finished in third place in the team competition and Florida Team No. 2, which included Dobie McManus, Joe



Joe Ondo, CGCS, tours the GCSAA 75th Anniversary pavilion on the trade show floor. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Pantaleo and Tyler Warner, finished in fifth place.

The FGCSA held its traditional reception Feb. 7 to provide a time and place where all members, wives and supporting sponsors could meet and confer. The ballroom was

decorated in a red-white-and-blue theme to demonstrate our American spirit and show our support for our troops overseas. Nearly 1,000 people made it to the reception to enjoy the camaraderie, food, drink and entertainment by the seven-piece band,

Margo Fontaine and The Rodeo Drive.

See the thank-you ad (page 13) for those sponsors and FGCSA chapters that made the reception possible. See you next in year in Atlanta.

thanks



The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support of the 2002 FGCSA Reception

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Number 11, Par 3
Photo by Daniel Zelazek



THE OCEAN REEF CLUB ...

Tropical Paradise on a Lump of Rock

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

The northeast wind was whipping whitecaps up into a cappuccino frenzy in Barnes Sound as I took U.S. 1 to Key Largo. I was hoping for chamber-of-commerce weather and picture-post-card-views of emerald grass flats and gin-clear water as I made a rare visit to the Florida Keys. A slowly moving low-pressure area put an end to that hope; nevertheless, I was headed to the exotic Ocean Reef Club to discover the secret of how Lee VanValkenburg and his staff maintained a high-profile golf course on a lump of rock on the edge of the ocean. I have had just enough geology and grass-growing experi-

ence to know this can't be the easiest assignment in the world even if the fishing is great!

The Ocean Reef Club was born in 1945 when Minnesota real estate broker Morris Baker bought sight-unseen a 40-acre fish camp on Dispatch Creek on Upper Key Largo. The locals on the Card Sound side of the island called the area Ocean Reef and Baker thought that name would do just fine for his fishing camp. Before he brought Ocean Reef to life, Key Largo had a long, rough-and-tumble history.

Key Largo means "long island" in Spanish and it is one of the oldest place names on



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Dolphin No.14, a 497-yard par 5. The lake was created by mining and removing the limestone bedrock in 10-foot stone pillars and selling them to a rock products company. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

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Dolphin No. 5, a 148-yard par 3. Since blasting out the lakes was prohibited, Ocean Reef had to purchase the rip-rap boulders to line the lake banks. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

on the North American continent, dating from the early 16th century. Spanish explorers found the string of keys lacking in mineral wealth (gold) and fresh water, but the mahogany trees on the island were prized by these explorers who dubbed the species "Madera" or wood. The mahogany groves were logged over the centuries with the last grove reportedly being harvested in the late 1940s.

The first settlers built along the ocean and ruins of old cisterns and evidence of date palms and tamarind groves mark the isolated settlements linked by the ruts of an old wagon road that runs well east of the present SR 905. These early inhabitants had mixed livelihoods as fishermen, slavers, and lime and pineapple growers. Their homes were built from lumber salvaged from the sea or as they called it, the "Ocean Lumber Company."

Those of my generation can't help thinking of Key Largo without thinking of the 1948 movie of the same name starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Reportedly some bar scenes were filmed on location at the Caribbean Club near Mile Marker 104 on U.S. 1. However, not one of the actors ever set foot on the island for any scenes of the movie; the bulk was filmed on a Hollywood sound stage. Plenty of celebrities visit now including President George Bush, Sr., an avid golfer and fisherman, who also frequented Gasparilla Island on the Florida west coast.

Golf made its debut on Key Largo in 1955 when Baker opened a nine-hole course and added a second nine a few years later. In 1960 a regulation golf course designed by Bruce Devlin and Robert Von Hagge was built and Bob Toski was named director of golf. The game rose in prominence as one of the many amenities for residents and visitors alike.

During the 1970s, the annual Pro-Guest Golf Tournament was in its second decade attracting a fraternity of touring pros including Gene Sarazen, Julius Boros, Dave Marr, Dow Finsterwald, Bob Murphy, Jim Colbert, and Tommy Bolt along with Toski, Ocean Reef's own Mister Golf.

The present-day Ocean Reef Club, with its Dolphin and Harbor courses, evolved from a succession of ownership groups and course configurations; the latter included the Snapper and Barracuda courses and the Card Sound Golf Club.

Ocean Reef's director of golf maintenance, Lee VanValkenburg, CGCS came to Key Largo in 1985, succeeding Dick Blake as the superintendent of the Card Sound Golf Club. He served as the director of golf maintenance for both Card Sound and Ocean Reef clubs from 1992 to 1995 and assumed his current role with Ocean Reef in 1995 during the final split of the courses into their present operations.

In 2000 and 2001, the Dolphin Course was redesigned by Chip Powell with the construction done by Reed Berlinsky. Because of the short grow-in time between seasons and limited fresh water, only nine holes were renovated

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Superintendent Lee VanValkenburg had to outfox land crabs with geotextiel fabric layers and ballast stone to keep them from undermining the rip-rap lining the lake on Harbor No. 6, a 162-yard par 3. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



The Harbor Course may be shorter than the Dolphin, but the 412-yard 10th hole challenges all players to bring their "A" games. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



Harbor No. 4, 254-yard par 4/3. The Harbor Course is carved through the native hardwood hammock and managing shade is a high priority. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

at a time, which offered its own special challenges according to VanValkenburg.

VanValkenburg said, "In 2000 we found ourselves growing in TifEagle on one nine while maintaining our old Tifdwarf greens on the other. The next year we were in TifEagle grow-in mode again on one nine and maturing the one-year-old greens on the other, so we had two different regimens in play at all times.

"We chose the nine-hole-only approach because we have limited storage capacity for our irrigation water and if we got into a drought situation, we didn't want to have to rescue 18 holes of brand-new turf. So we bit the bullet."

There won't be much rest for the weary as Ocean Reef has begun master planning for the upgrade of the Harbor Course.



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'...if we want to trim limbs that overhang the cart paths we have to go through the course and remove any Florida tree snails and put them in a moist pail. After the trimming is finished, we tack paper cups containing the snails back onto the trees so they can crawl out and return to their habitat.'

"The most positive thing to come out of all of this is the creation of a formal master plan for the club," said VanValkenburg. "This document gives succeeding committees the guidance for what has been done and what needs to be done to achieve the stated goals of the club. Previously, we had a laundry list each year of projects to do this or that, but now we have it all mapped out and we can really plan ahead, which is what I like to do.

"The Harbor Course is going to be an interesting and challenging project. We don't have the access points as we did on the Dolphin Course so we will have to work our way out from the far points back to the road. We have some serious shade considerations; and we have been documenting the sunlight patterns by taking photos of the greens at set intervals from June 23, the summer solstice, and during the year as the sun moves south casting more shadows on the turf.

"If we have to trim or remove any trees, we will have to get permits from the county since they have very strict codes along those

lines. Even now, if we want to trim limbs that overhang the cart paths we have to go through the course and remove any Florida tree snails and put them in a moist pail. After the trimming is finished, we tack paper cups containing the snails back onto the trees so they can crawl out and return to their habitat.

"Another big consideration for the Harbor Course renovation will be upgrading the irrigation system. It's a long run to the course, and the pipe sizing isn't consistent, so we have serious friction loss which needs to be corrected. We are evaluating possible pump sites and ways to create additional storage for our irrigation water."

Fresh water, much less irrigation water, is a critical issue for island dwellers in the Florida Keys. Potable water costs \$6 per thousand gallons and so reverse osmosis technology has been employed since the 1970s to provide cheaper water for irrigation. The irrigation wells are more than 1,000 feet deep and tap into the southern extremities of the Floridan Aquifer as it empties somewhere into the Atlantic Ocean.

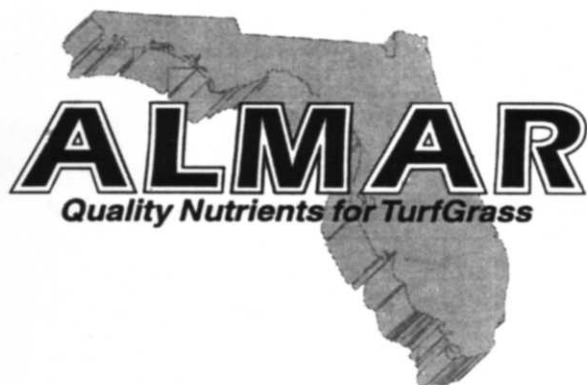
At this point in the strata, the aquifer water tests about 15,000 parts total dissolved salts and is made usable by passing the water under pressure through osmotic membranes. The water is then stored in a 2.7-million-gallon, shallow reservoir for pumping onto the grounds. While the golf course is the primary user right now, there are plans to expand the use in the future to include more home and condo sites, and resort grounds areas.

Like most people, I think of the tropical islands as getting lots of rainfall, but VanValkenburg says Upper Key Largo averages around 38 inches per year compared to the 50-60 inch average for mainland Florida.

VanValkenburg says, "We also have the plight of being the stall point for a lot of weather fronts. We get pounded with days of high winds and salt spray followed by high humidity and heavy rains as the tropical air meets the frontal zone. We can go into disease mode pretty quickly if we're not careful. We often time preventive fungicide applications when the fronts approach because we know the conditions will be ripe for disease."

Another challenge for growing turf in the Keys is the lack of soil. With only a couple of inches of material covering the limestone bedrock, renovating the golf course was interesting to say the least.

"We wanted to clean up our fairways



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