

took a job on the crew at the Myakka Pines G.C. in Englewood under superintendent Pat McClain. Copeman was a sponge as he soaked up all he could learn under McClain's tutelage, and in turn McClain let him learn all the jobs on the course. Copeman set his sights on becoming a superintendent. After five years at Myakka Pines, he went to work for Eddie Fatica at the Plantation Golf and Country Club. Copeman's apprenticeship was about to get a big boost. After only 30 days of watching Copeman in action, Fatica promoted him to assistant superintendent.

Copeman says, "Eddie took all the course management skills I had learned on the job and molded me into the kind of superintendent it takes to be successful in this business." Four years later, Copeman assumed his first superintendent's job at Lemon Bay. He's been here for 13 years, a testament not only to his agronomy skills but to his character as a manager and a leader. Copeman's responsibilities include overseeing both the Lemon Bay and Long Marsh courses. Copeman acknowledges that he couldn't be successful without two critical elements at Lemon Bay.

"I'm a firm believer that you're only as good as your resources, but I'm also a believer in not having excuses like 'our budget is too small' or 'I don't have enough people or the right kind of equipment.' I try to do the best we can with what we have. In this age of technology and new products, I don't forget about the old ways of doing things. We're not too proud to hand-pull a weed or hand-rake pine needles or roll up our sleeves to do whatever it takes to get the job done. I don't want to hear *why* you can't get a job done. I want you to tell me *how* you got it done. That kind of attitude takes a supportive staff and we have a good one at both of our locations.

"The other element of course is the people who provide those needed resources... the owners and members. This can be a fickle business, as you know. I never thought I'd be here for 13 years, based on the way it goes at some clubs. I have to publicly thank our membership. They have shown the greatest respect for me and my knowledge of the golf course. I can tell you the respect is mutual. I can go to them about anything and I do go well in advance to discuss issues, situations and needs so they know what to expect. This relationship wouldn't be as solid as it is without the guidance and mentoring I have received from Peter Hodson, the general manager. Peter has been involved with the club since 1989, first as a consultant and now full time since 1999.

"Some superintendents fail two or three years after a big effort because the club doesn't match the resources to their demands or expectations. The superintendent has to be able to clearly identify and present and defend what it takes to provide the desired

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Long Marsh GC



Long Marsh GC Crew

Ownership: Members

Playing Policy: Semi-private all year

Number of holes: 18, 7,160 yards, par 72,

Slope/Rating: 74/127

Designed by Ted McCanlis; constructed by M.G.I.

Opened: 1999

Management Team: Same as Lemon Bay and includes Head Golf Professional Ted Green. Golf Course Superintendent Mike Troxell reports to Chip Copeman.

Acreage under maintenance: 115

Greens: Tifdwarf; Avg. Size 5,000 sq. ft., Acres: 4;

HOC: 5/32 inch summer, 1/8 inch winter.

Overseeding: 10 lbs/1000 sq. ft. Princeville seed mixture. Green speed goals: 8.0 summer, 9.0 winter.

Tees: Tifway 419, Acres: 5; HOC = 5/8 inch.

Overseeding: Perennial Ryegrass @ 400 lbs/A.

Fairways: Tifway 419, Acres: 45; HOC = 5/8 inch.

Overseeding: Perennial ryegrass @ 300 lbs/A.

Roughs: Tifway 319, Acres: 60; HOC = 1.5 inch. No overseeding.

Bunkers: 13, Sand type: 38 Special; Machine-raked with Toro Sand Pro, Hand-rake lips.

Waterways: 16 lakes/ponds. Aquatic weed maintenance by outside contractor.

Irrigation: Lakes and Canals; Pumping System: Flotronex VFD; Control System: Toro LTC. SWFWMD watering restrictions apply when in force. Converting to reclaimed water source in the near future.

Staff: Total including superintendent: 9. Scheduled 40 hrs straight time and 4 hours overtime per week. Superintendent Mike Troxell, Equipment Technician Andy Easley, Pest Control Technician Ray Terrazas.

Environment: Long Marsh is a fully certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.



Trimmed-back mangroves (by permit) provide a gap for the tee shot over Lemon Creek on the par 3, 15th hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

results. All you can do is give the best you can for the size of the budget. To do that you need to surround yourself with good people. They don't always walk through the door. Sometimes you have to mold them from the people you have and those you can hire to work in this business. Then you have to motivate them.

"I believe in teaching employees something new as often as possible. It makes them more effective and it shows you have an interest in them. They may leave and take that skill with them, but they know who made them more valuable. I always encourage my superintendents to share what's been given to them, the tricks of the trade, to pass it on to others. My journey through the ranks has been a great learning experience from being on the bottom rung and working my way up. I know what I can expect from others. I've learned to assess their strengths and weaknesses and harness them to be productive employees. Like I always say, 'There's more than one way to get downtown. Some roads just take longer to get there.'"

Copeman also believes that his golfing ability gives him an edge when it comes to evaluating playing conditions and credibility when he explains what needs to be done to achieve those conditions.

Chapter Three: The Sanctuary

One of the roads followed at Lemon Bay was the path of becoming a certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, which they accomplished in 1998 and renewed in 2003. Their sister course, Long Marsh, is also certified, becoming the 60th course in Florida to achieve that distinction.

Having an eight-acre eagle preserve in the middle of your golf course is like hanging out a sign saying, "Hey Look At Me!" and the eagle watchers do watch. Copeman is mindful of nesting season and keeps projects to a minimum in the area to avoid disturbing the eagles. His diligence has paid off as eagle watchers report seeing eaglets fledged each spring. Mother Nature unfortunately disturbed them more when a recent storm damaged their primary nest. The eagles have been constructing a temporary home in a pine tree on one of the fairways. Everyone is anxious to see if they will repair the old nest.

The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association is supporting Audubon International's five-year campaign (50-in-5) to get 50 percent of the nation's courses enrolled in the Cooperative Sanctuary Program. It is a natural fit for courses to work with an environmentally focused organization that recognizes golf courses can be a tremendous asset to wildlife and natural resources. More members are joining all the time, but why the slow pace? It can't be the dues; they're only \$150 a year. The biggest fear is that it will take more time. Time that superintend-



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View of the dogleg third hole from the green. Lemon Bay rewards good shot selections, not sheer length off the tee. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

ents don't feel they have. Copeman found an answer at Lemon Bay that saved him time and provided a great learning experience for area high school students.

Copeman said, "Danny Claude, the son of the club's executive secretary Cindy Claude, was an honor student looking for an extra-credit project he could do for one of his classes. I put him to work installing and monitoring nesting boxes and taking water samples. He worked with me and we went over the reports

and results and he got school credit for the environmental work.

"I bought the wood for the birdhouses and took it and the instructions to the Lemon Bay High School and the shop class built our birdhouses. We got nesting boxes and the kids got class credit for the project and the knowledge that this golf course was doing something for the environment and they helped. The high school swim team joined an "Adopt a Shore" program and they help keep the shorelines cleaned up.

There are kids out there who hunger to do something for the environment. Why not enlist them to help with the ACSP on your course and relieve some of the workload off the staff?

"We put ID placards on each golf car so the members can identify the many species of birds that inhabit the course while they play, and we have bird counts on Men's and Ladies' days. As part of our certification, we have an ongoing program of adding native trees, shrubs and beneficial vegetation along the banks of our lakes. We

Fun Facts



Chip Copeman believes environmental awareness is a way of life at Lemon Bay. Photo by Joel Jackson.

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

1. **Car:** 1998 Conversion Van
2. **The last good movie I saw:** Patriot
3. **I stay home to watch:** NFL football
4. **The book I've been reading:** The Bible
5. **Favorite meal:** Lobster, salad and bread
6. **Favorite performers:** Elvis Presley
7. **Prized possessions:** My son and daughter
8. **Personal Heroes:** My mom and dad
9. **Nobody knows that I:** Am shy
10. **If I could do it over:** I wouldn't change a thing
11. **I'd give anything to meet:** President Bush
13. **My fantasy is:** Play golf at Augusta National
14. **The one thing I can't stand:** When people say, "Oh, I forgot!"
15. **If I could change one thing about myself:** Putting the Lord first in my life at an earlier age
17. **My most humbling experience:** Watching my son and daughter raising up their first- and second-place junior-golf trophies. It was like passing the torch.
18. **The words that best describe me:** Motivated, dedicated, responsible

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An overcast, dewy dawn on the well-bunkered sixth hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

also maintain a 20-foot no-spray buffer around our water hazards.

“We carefully select sites for new trees so they don’t create a future shade problem. We are experiencing some pine-tree-decline problems, so we have hired Emerald Green to use their injection program to save them. We also expanded the pine straw areas around the trees to restore their native habitat and avoid competition with the turf.”

Chapter Four: Maintaining the Course

In 1991 USGA Agronomist John Foy rode the course with the newly hired Copeman and declared, “This is the worst golf course in the state.” A year later his comment was, “This is the probably the fastest turn around of conditions I’ve ever seen.” Copeman took it as a great compliment.

Copeman began his renovation of the course by photo documentation of the problems and provided a historical record of how the course improved over time. One of the early problems was eradicating the prolific smutgrass. A household sponge mop with a wringer proved to be more useful than the rope-wick-type applicators. It took persistence but it paid off. The next obstacle was to improve the single-row irrigation system so grass could be grown on the huge bare areas in the roughs.

Nematodes plagued the course for many years and they were fought with the usual array of products. Copeman says the results of the Curfew application last year were excellent. Overseeding is the only other challenge of consequence. Lemon Bay is not overseeded; the Long

Marsh course is. Copeman says, “Our location next to the bay helps to moderate the winter temperatures and we can get away with not having to overseed. Certainly it helps in the spring when transition takes place. We don’t have to worry about balancing the overseeding with the native bermudagrass, like we do at Long Marsh. When we do get a prolonged cold, gloomy spell in the winter, we have to watch our traffic during the poor growing conditions.”

So we come to the end of the story. There are no magic potions or silver bullets at Lemon Bay. It is just hard-working people going about their jobs conscientiously in harmony with each other and with nature. Wouldn’t it be great if this story could be told over and over at more golf courses?



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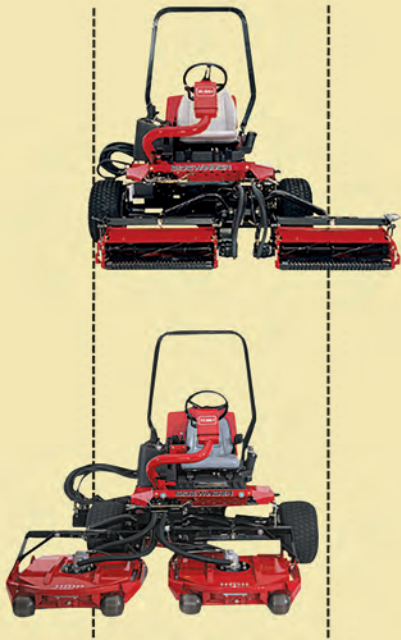
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The Other 70 Percent of the Golf Course



Multi-gang rotary rough mower used at the Johns Island Club. Photo by Joel Jackson.

According to GCSAA's figures for land use at an 18-hole course; roughs, woods and water hazards make up about 70 percent of a course's total area that is "under maintenance." That's a fact that escapes most people when they talk about the inputs of chemicals, fertilizer, water and labor on a golf course. We spend the most time and money on the greens, tee, and fairways which comprise about 27 percent of the golf course area.

As environmental concerns heighten and budgets tighten, the roughs have become the place of choice to make changes in how we view them. More and more designers are treating rough areas between greens and tees as natural areas with minimal maintenance requirements, and existing courses are finding areas where they can convert previously mowed, fertilized and irrigated turf into native plantings to reduce costs and create more habitat.

For the roughs in play, the trend toward rotary mowers is gaining favor as a labor saver. Two of your peers, Chuck Calhoun and Buddy Keene share their thoughts on roughs from a trend perspective to practical operations.

The Evolution of Rough Maintenance

In the ongoing quest to provide the best possible playing conditions for today's golfers, throughout the course there have been many changes. In addition to new types of turf, advances

in equipment technology may in fact influence how we manage one area of the golf course that not long ago received little or no attention: "the rough."

There are significant contrasts in today's maintenance practices versus the practices of just a few years ago. I can only relay my own experiences. However, I do recall in the early 70s that the "rough" was just that.

Webster's Dictionary describes "rough" as "jagged, scratchy, crude, incomplete, severe,



A lot of superintendents like the mulching aspect of the rotary mowers which chops up leaves and even pine cones saving labor. They also wade through tall roughs after missing a couple of mowings due to wet conditions. Photo by Joel Jackson.



Chuck Calhoun, Superintendent Johns Island South Course. Photo by Joel Jackson.

unpolished, uneven, irregular, and bumpy" and many other terms that, if they were to exist today at any golf course, would surely send the superintendent packing.

Prior to the practice of wall-to-wall irrigation, in most instances with only rainfall for irrigation, the "rough" consisted of whatever would grow and could sustain itself. In the tropics of Florida, that could be almost anything since pre-emergent treatments were new and unreliable and might leave you with a less-than-desirable playing surface.

The gear-driven reel units of this era worked excellently on turf, but unless the reels were kept extremely sharp, they would not cut the varied grasses that nature produced. Even then, the rugged terrain and native growth would dull the units very quickly.

We had to use pull-behind rotary units that were generally designed for pasture and roadsides which didn't really matter, as most often the "rough" had a more-than-passing resemblance to the aforementioned areas. These mowers were usually single-deck units, PTO driven with maybe two