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At 582 yards, No.17 West is the longest of all the par-5 holes. The shot to the green is guarded by a native wetland. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

Daily morning crew meetings and assignments coordinate the maintenance routine with club functions while enabling maximum turf care. Additionally Wright attends weekly manager meetings and monthly green committee meetings.

participation is up and our educational speakers are better than ever. I am confident that leaders will always step up to keep the flow going.”

The city of Sarasota and Sarasota County have been very concerned about environmental impacts of lawn care and golf course maintenance practices over the past few years.

A small contingent of Suncoast superintendents, including Wright, has been representing the interests of the local golf course industry supported by a couple of vendors and a few general managers. The key to crafting responsible regulations is to base the decisions on sound science which result in best management practices.

Laurel Oak demonstrates the spirit of many environmentally friendly practices in its normal maintenance routine.

For example, storm runoff on the

property is carried by surface drainage swales to ponds and lake on the property. As Wright says, stormwater runoff is very slow to leave the property.

Many essentially out-of-play roughs have been converted to bahiagrass which requires fewer maintenance inputs, and at least 12 native waste areas of crushed coquina rock under large stands of trees eliminate the need for even trying to manage turf in the dense shade, a frustrating exercise at best.

The use of crushed coquina on golf courses is a becoming a more common occurrence. Besides being used under trees, it is often used as natural pervious cart paths and as a “mulch” if you will in native or waste areas. The material does not float like woody mulches and does not blow out of hazards like sand in windy conditions.

Wildlife habitat aids Audubon certification

Laurel Oak is awaiting final certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. The fauna list includes otters, fox, deer, rabbits, squirrels, songbirds, wading birds, hawks, migrating white pelicans, softshelled turtles, a few alligators and an occasional visiting bald eagle. Photos by Joel Jackson.



White ibis, two adults and one juvenile (center) rest in the shade of bald cypress trees.



A Great White Heron stands vigil watching for his next dinner.



Water birds like the moorhen, above, forage for food around the aquatic plants in golf course lakes.



Clear golf course lake water reveals female tilapia, left, guarding her sandy nest along the shoreline.

FUN FACTS ABOUT ADAM



The Wright Stuff

Vehicle: Toyota Sequoia

Last good movie I saw: Departed

The book I've been reading: The Blind Side by Michael Lewis

Favorite meal: Steak & Lobster with a baked potato

Prized possessions: My friends & family

Personal Heroes: My brother Greg and my mentor Tom Vlach

The one thing I can't stand: People who are late

I stay home to watch: 24

If I could do it over: I wouldn't change a thing

My fantasy is: To eat whatever I want and not gain a pound

If I could change one thing about myself: Become more patient

My most irrational act: Thinking I could do it all myself

Most humbling experience: Death of my grandfather

My dream foursome would be: My dad, brother, Tiger and me

My best fish story: Catching my first tarpon last year in Boca Grande Pass




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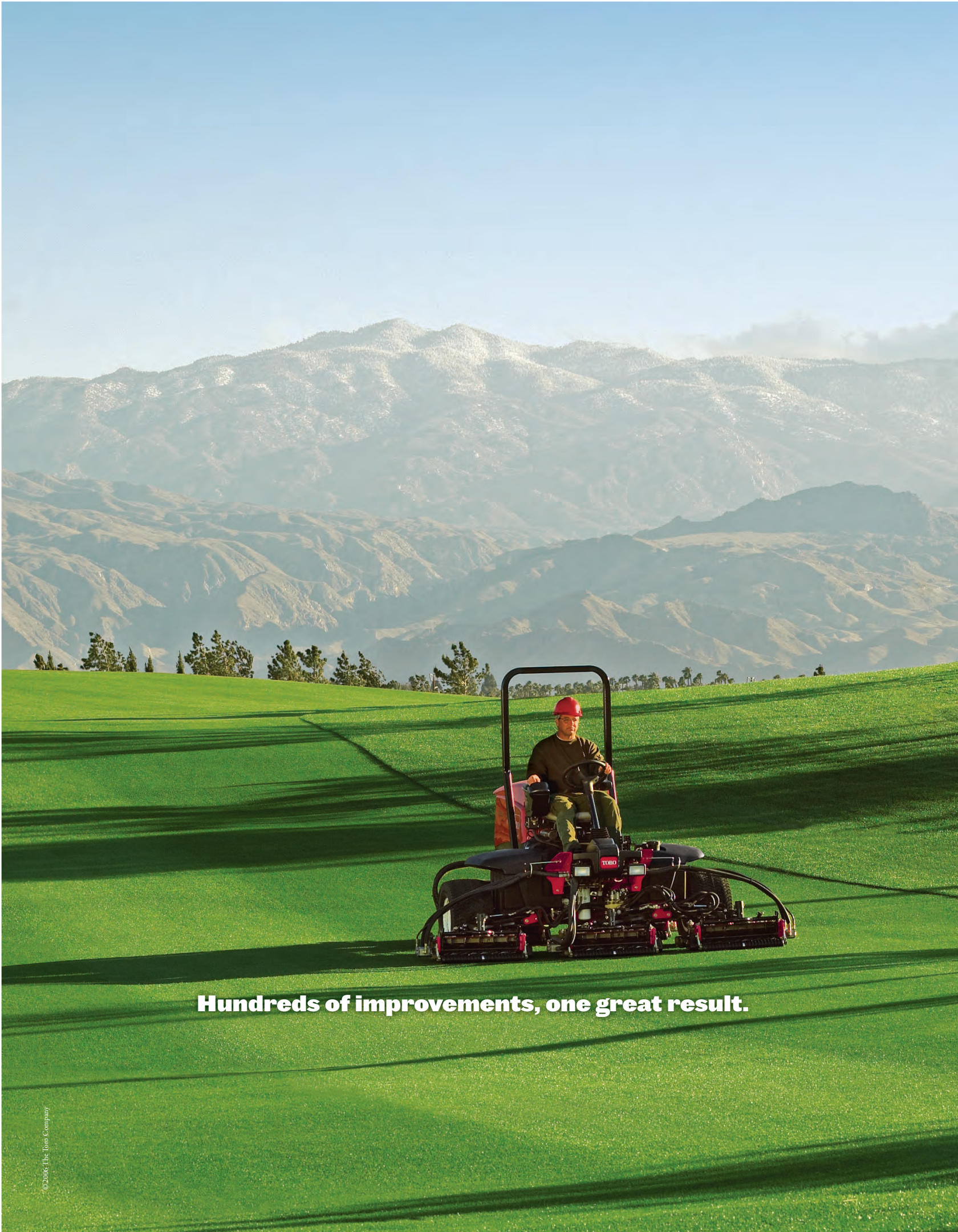
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It tends to have minimal weed invasion and does not require very much maintenance. If a golfer hits a wayward shot into the crushed stone areas, it provides a much easier recovery shot than from a fluffy lie in pine needle mulched areas.

Wright said, "The members have also made a concerted effort to convert has many formal landscape beds as

possible to native plant materials which reduces the amount of water, fertilizer and labor involved in maintaining them. We have also changed several out of play areas in the roughs from bermudagrass to bahiagrass which also reduces inputs. On the 10th hole we instituted a 30-foot no-spray and no-fertilizer buffer zone around a wetland bordering the right side of the hole and the lake near the tee.

We raised the height of cut and only mow the area a few times per year."

The course is irrigated with treated effluent, which provides a disposal service for the local utilities and does not affect the underground water resources needed for public consumption. Rather it recycles and filters the waste water to put it back into the hydrologic cycle.

But reclaimed water is also a limited resource as more municipalities begin to convert municipal landscape irrigation sources to reclaimed water. Consequently Wright and others have adopted the practice of using wetting agents and penetrants in conjunction with spot hand watering of severely droughty areas on their courses. This practice allows superintendents to supplement dry hot spots without turning on a head or zone and watering adjacent areas not under drought stress.

Laurel Oak and its fellow courses provide jobs, revenues and recreation for the people of Sarasota and the club members should promote the benefits their course provides the community.

A golf course is a living ecological system subject to attack and infestation from insects, diseases and weeds. Wright's biggest foes are mole crickets and grubs which he controls alternately with applications of slit-injected Chipco Choice® and Alectis®. For weed control, Wright applies the pre-emergent herbicide Ronstar® with his seasonal fairway and rough fertilizer applications in February, June and September. He normally applies a poly-coated, slow-release blend, usually 22-0-18 from Harrell's, but the formula also depends on soil sample results.

The greens are fertilized with a combination of granular slow-release fertilizers and foliar sprays to provide continuous feeding for the closely mowed turf. A Tru-Prill blend of 10-2-20 is applied every few weeks and weekly foliar feedings supply micronutrients like iron and manganese and perhaps 0.1 lb. of nitrogen in solution for quick uptake by the turfgrass. Three core aerifications are made to the greens per year and two on the fairways. During the winter

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This dogleg on No. 10 East shows one of the 12 crushed-coquina native areas that take several acres of turfgrass out of maintenance, thus reducing required inputs. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

Laurel Oak is a community asset in so many ways ... and yet there is one more: The Laurel Oak Cup. This special event held each year, usually in September, raises money for the Special Olympics.

season, small solid tines are used every other week to prevent compaction on the putting surfaces.

Daily morning crew meetings and assignments coordinate the maintenance routine with club functions while enabling maximum turf care. Additionally Wright attends weekly manager meetings and monthly green committee meetings.

Wright said, "I have had two general managers since I have been here and both of them supported and encouraged my participation in the local chapter and they also knew the value of having me engaged in continuing education to stay on top of the latest technology and the latest issues facing golf course management."

Laurel Oak is a community asset in so many ways – from its irrigation disposal of reclaimed water to the

bountiful wildlife found on the property – and yet there is one more, The Laurel Oak Cup. This special event held each year, usually in September, raises money for the Special Olympics. Organized by Sue Hokamp and strongly supported by the members of the club, the community, and local PGA Tour professional and television commentator Paul Azinger, it is one of the largest fundraisers in the region.

Beyond the game and all its traditions and the recreation and enjoyment that people derive from playing it, operating a golf course is a business and on the balance sheet a golf course like Laurel Oak has environmental and economic assets that benefit the whole community and not only the residents and members.