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Golf's unseen heroes.

AFTERWORDS

superintendent John Zimmers, Jr.

As Rich Lerner was interviewing Zimmers and talking about the historically fast and intimidating greens – often kept at 15 on the stimp meter – it was revealed that the greens were push-up, clay-based greens that had never been rebuilt! Whoa! Hold the horses.

This goes against everything we were ever taught and what we are told must transpire to have greens that can withstand increasingly outlandish golfer expectations.

Obviously there must be some missing information that the quick sound bite didn't cover. I mean, aren't we supposed to build greens according to USGA specifications calling for extensive laboratory testing of particle size conformity, percolation rates, pore space, organic content, drainage, etc, etc?

The fact that the USGA has held a record eight U. S. Open Championships

at Oakmont only adds to my confusion. The Green Section just went on DEFCON 3.

Zimmers did offer up one mystical explanation involving the evolution of a mysterious strain of *Poa annua* bluegrass that grows or survives only on the property. Transplants to other locales wither and die. It grows only at Oakmont. Put the turf breeders on the case. Will Penn State, home of legendary grasses, please weigh in on that one?

Of course the other obvious ironies of the week included the contrast of the affable corpulent cigarette puffing Cabrera matching wits and whacks from the jungle formerly known as the rough with the buff, hard-body Woods who has a strict workout regimen and steely determined game face demeanor. I'm not criticizing Woods, actually I was pulling for him to win, despite picking Furyk in my Pick Your Pro contest. I think

Tiger will break Jack's major records, it was just ironic that that the mook outperformed the machine when it counted on this day.

In many ways the common man's victory was a nice reminder that good people, humble people, average work-a-day people can and do succeed in this high-tech, high-profile, politically correct world that we live in.

It was also a reminder to me that golf course superintendents who work hard to make ends meet with budgets that are squeezed ever tighter can find success. They are people, like Cabrera, who manage their drought-stricken or storm-ridden courses calmly in pressure-cooker situations with humor and determination and a love for the moment and for what they do.

It isn't easy being a duck in pond full of alligators, but ducks can fly while gators crawl (and tigers prowls).



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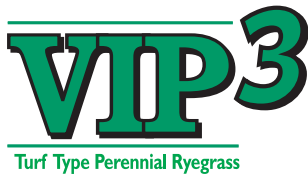
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