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BILTMORE GOLF CLUB



Biltmore GC Maintenance Staff. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Location: Coral Gables

of Holes: 18 holes Yardage: 6,772 yards
Par: 71 Slope & Rating: 72.1/121

Ownership: City of Coral Gables/
Biltmore Hotel Management

Playing Policy: Public/Resort/
Memberships available. Average rounds
per year: 60,000

Designed by: Donald Ross. Opened: 1925

Management Team: Managing General
Matthias Kammerer, Director of Golf
Justin Bruton, Head Golf Professional
Lara Payloff, Golf Course Superintendent
Bryan Singleton

Special and Ongoing Projects: In 2007,
golf course architect Brian Silva did a
complete renovation of the greens, tees,
bunkers and greens irrigation. He also
redesigned the "short game" and teaching
areas.

**Total property acres under
maintenance:** 145

Greens: TifDwarf. Average size: 6,000
sq.ft., total 3.1 acres; HOC: .125 to .135
inches. Overseeding: none. Green speed
goals: 9.5 to 10.5

Tees: Celebration. 3.3 height of cut: .350
in. Overseeding: Ryegrass @ 15 lbs. per
1,000 sq.ft.

Fairways: Tifway 419 with some
Bermuda off-types. Total acres: 40.
HOC: .550 in. Overseeding: None.

Roughs: Bermuda and St. Augustine.
Total acres: 40. HOC: 1.50 – 2.0 inches.
Overseeding: None

Bunkers: 66. Sand type: G-Angle.
Machine raked. Equipment: Toro Sand Pro

Naturalized/Native areas/beds: 2 acres.
Pine straw under Australian Pine Trees
left of No. 10 fairway.

Waterways/Lakes/Ponds: Acres: 10. The
Coral Gables Waterway runs through the
course.

How maintained: City of Coral Gables
and Lake Masters

Wildlife Inventory: Bald eagles, hawks
and songbirds of all varieties plus coyotes,
red-tail fox, and gopher tortoise inhabit
the uplands. Alligators, otters, turtles,
waterfowl, shore birds and wading birds
find food and shelter in the lakes.

Irrigation: Well water. Pumps: two 75-hp
pumps and a 20-hp jockey pump with

a Flowtronex control panel. Irrigation
Controller: Rainbird Nimbus II. Number
of heads: 752. Spacing: 90 ft.

Water Restrictions: None currently in
effect.

**Water Management/Conservation
practices:** Water greens, tees and fairways
as needed. Water roughs when they show
signs of stress.

Staff: Total including superintendent: 16
with 15 full time and 1 part time. Schedule:
40 hours straight time. Seasonal variation
in labor: Very little. May back off some of
the part-time hours in the winter.

Key Staff: Assistant Danilo Perez; Second
Assistant Ryan Hackert; Head Equipment
Tech Richard Ramos; Assistant
Equipment Tech David Figueroa; Pest
Control Tech Osman Escalante; Irrigation
Tech Chris Lopez.

Meetings/ Communications: Weekly
meetings with hotel general manager.
Monthly crew meeting or as needed for
special occasions.

Special Events: Host Junior Orange Bowl
Golf Tournament. Hosted the Miami
Open back in the early 1930's.

At top: Picture of the Par 4, 5th hole taken back in March when it was still cooler and much drier. Photo by Joel Jackson.



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huge 700,000 gallon, 23,000 square-foot swimming pool was emptied and completely resurfaced with polished marble. In fact I saw that renovation in progress during a family outing to the hotel back in August 2012 when we visited our daughter who was on assignment in Miami.

At the 1926 gala opening on the Miami Biltmore Country Club, Dr. Frank Crane, a popular local writer and columnist of the era, predicted, "Many people will come and go, but this structure will remain a thing of lasting beauty." That prediction came true in 1996, when the National Register of Historic Places designated the Biltmore a National Historic Landmark, an elite title offered to only 3 percent of all historic structures.

The golf course came into existence in 1925 and, 14 years later, the South Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association was organized in 1939 near the end of the Jazz Era. The history of this unique property and how the golf course fits into this landscape is one of golf's great stories. Next, we venture out on the course with the superintendent Bryan Singleton.

On the Course

We know the southern half of the property was sold and became the Riviera Country Club back in 1945. Essentially, Bird Road is the dividing line between the two courses. Most all of the holes on the Biltmore course run east-west, while the holes on the Riviera course run north-south to fit the original property lines. Like the Biltmore course, the Riviera course is also a classic "parkland" layout of the 1920's with no holes running between home sites. There is a cluster of homes on Bird Road that also separates the two properties.

I mention the Riviera CC, because ironically before coming to the Biltmore, Singleton was the superintendent of the Riviera CC from 1991 to 2006. He came on board just in time for the major 2007 Ross restoration by Brian Silva. Also ironically, Singleton also worked with Silva at Riviera in the late 1990s to do the renovation to that part of the old original layout. Bryan has been tied to this historical landmark in one way or another for the past 26 years.

In light of the historic landmark status of the property prior the renovation of the golf course, Silva had some interesting comments.

"If the Biltmore were a private club, the course surely would have been changed dramatically through the years," he said. "As it happened, the course was treated as any other underfunded muni would have been treated in tough times – it was left alone. This neglect was a blessing because the property was not planted with intrusive trees, and some of the most spectacular fairway bunkering was allowed simply to grass over."

Silva added, "These fairway bunkers were a real find.

SINGLETON FUN FACTS



Bryan is high-tech. Here he is using a hands-free phone.

Vehicle: 2006 GMC Canyon Pickup Truck

I stay home to watch: The Washington Redskins

Last good movie I saw: One of my favorites is "Saving Private Ryan"

Favorite performers: Jerry Garcia, Tom Hanks

What I've been reading: I recommend a good book by Wally Lamb *The Hour I First Believed*.

Favorite meal: Crab cakes, baked potato and coleslaw

Prized possessions: Family

Personal heroes: My parents

I'm better than anyone else when it comes to: Reliability

Nobody knows that I: Was a good chess player.

If I could do it over: I would have bought the house I was renting on Key Largo

I'd give anything to meet: Pope Francis

My fantasy is: Sail around the Caribbean

The one thing I can't stand: Miami traffic

If I could change one thing about myself: Play better golf

My most irrational act: Doing a bungee jump

Most humbling experience: Having great greens one day and the next day I'm scrambling

The words that best describe me: Loyal

My dream foursome would be: Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins (the Apollo 11 crew)

My best fish story: Caught my first sailfish off Miami Beach with Craig and Jason Maret.

My most memorable golf shot: While playing Westview CC in Miami, I hit a driver into a pond. Took a drop and then holed out from 135 yards for a birdie.



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These cross-bunkers are a classic Ross feature with the high berms behind them they become deep menacing hazards, and since this is south Florida and relatively flat, they provide dramatic relief on the landscape. This sort of design feature doesn't usually survive. Once again because the Biltmore was a public course, they did."

Singleton told me that when they did just a greens surface/soil mix rehab in 1990-91 they found the center stakes of the original Ross greens. So all the elements were there for an authentic restoration.

Another feature of the course is the Coral Gables Waterway, a meandering canal that separates six holes on the back nine from the rest of the course.

"Back in those early days the hotel actually had Venetian gondolas with authentic Italian gondoliers poling guest from the hotel to Biscayne Bay," Singleton said. During my visit I did see a couple of kayakers plying the waterway and sharing it with a few Egyptian geese and other typical Florida birdlife. Also in 2007 all the bridges that spanned the waterway on the course were upgraded.

Singleton's turf management challenges include goose grass and some St. Augustine issues. He tested Specticle herbicide on the driving range before applying it to the rest of the course and, while it did a pretty good job on the course, he still has someone continuously spot-treating goose grass as a second

job pretty much every day. He says in Miami there's no let-up. The St. Augustine areas are mainly in the outer roughs, so it's not a real problem affecting playing conditions. His challenge is to make sure it doesn't spread, so he keeps a sharp eye on any encroachment.

The one pest that does keep him on his toes is the hunting billbug. In all my years, I've never heard of people saying they had a real billbug problem. Singleton said he thought only the grubs caused problems, but he swears he found chewed stem evidence from adults. The good news is that Acelyprin® does a good job on them. The bad news – most superintendents have a hard time identifying them. Singleton has become the go-to billbug guy in Miami, when others are having trouble identifying some mysterious damage on their greens.

The Go-To guys in Brian's career were first and foremost his hard-working parents who taught him a good work ethic growing up. Upon moving to Florida in 1987, Lee Van Valkenberg CGCS at the Card Sound GC on Key Largo became his career mentor and southern turfgrass tutor. Singleton also credits others like Tom Burrows CGCS, John Foy and one of his club managers, Bill Wagner, for helping him along his career path.

The Biltmore Golf Club has golf members, but it also caters to resort guests and public play. So for Singleton, his maintenance goals are simple: keep the course in private-



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*(fig. w-42)
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In this photo looking east to west and left to right, are the 6th, 7th, 17th and 18th holes Photo by Joel Jackson.

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club conditions and everybody should be happy. It is a rare combination of clientele, but then the Biltmore occupies a pretty rare place in the golf world.

Footnote

After doing my afternoon photo shoot that first day and wandering the hotel soaking up the historic architecture and furnishings, and viewing the endless photographs of all the visiting celebrities decorating the hallways and rooms, I enjoyed a quiet dinner and a few libations in the Biltmore Bar listening to the music of a piano and bass duo. I was reminded that this landmark was still a modern-day celebrity hangout when Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell walked in and also sat down at the bar.

I love my job!



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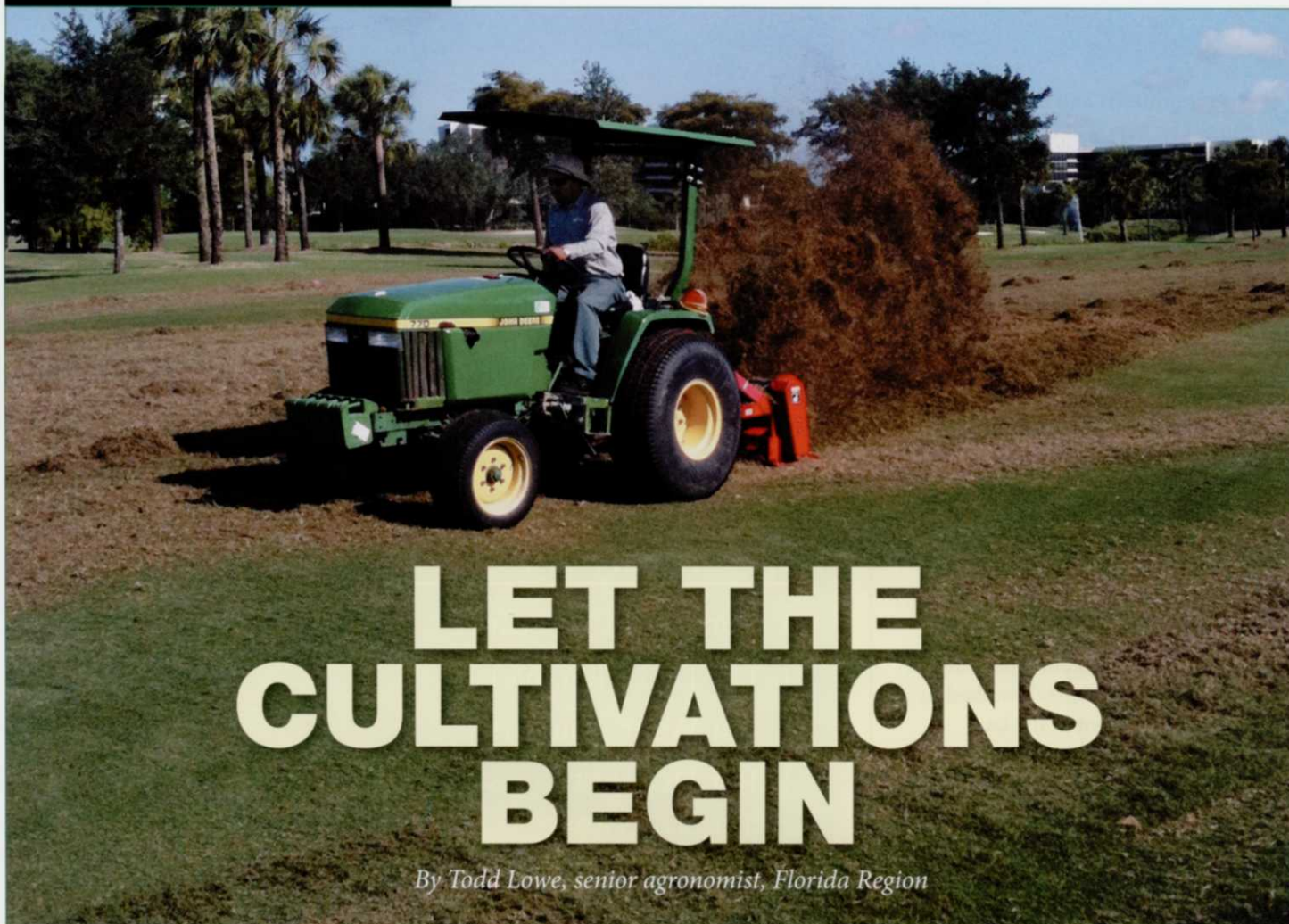
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LET THE CULTIVATIONS BEGIN

By Todd Lowe, senior agronomist, Florida Region

Warm season turfgrasses on golf courses require vigorous thatch removal to maintain a healthy playing surface. Photo by Bill Davidson.

Mower scalping followed by aggressive verticutting is an excellent cultivation practice for bermudagrass fairways. Over the past week or so, golf facilities throughout southern Florida have begun cultivating and “working” the turf through a series of maintenance practices.

Bermudagrass and seashore paspalum produce an abundance of above-ground and below-ground stems that can accumulate to produce thatch. Cultivation practices are necessary to reduce this stem layer, dilute thatch and improve overall turf quality and playability.

In Florida, cultivation practices generally take place from late spring through late summer, as warmer temperatures improve turf recovery. Each practice provides a slightly different benefit and several of them may take place at the same time to produce the desired effect.

Circle cutting – Mowing turf in a circular pattern reduces grain that can develop from mowing repeatedly in the same direction. This practice usually takes place on tees and fairways in the spring. Circle cutting is the least aggressive cultivation practice discussed in this update because it only addresses the surface canopy and does not dilute thatch.

Scalping – Scalping includes aggressively lowering mowing heights to remove much of the turf canopy and it generally takes place on golf course roughs. Bermudagrass roughs are often maintained at 1.25 to 1.5 inches but are scalped to less than

an inch for several weeks to improve turf uniformity. Scalping exposes the underlying stems and makes the turf appear yellow to tan for a week or two until new leaves are produced.

Verticutting – Verticutting, or vertical mowing, uses a series of vertically-oriented blades that thin the turf canopy and underlying thatch. Shallow penetration depths provide a light surface grooming effect, while deeper penetration dethatches putting greens, tees and fairways and requires a longer healing period.

Core aeration – Core aeration removes small plugs of thatch and soil. In addition to dethatching, core aeration reduces compaction and improves soil physical properties on each playing surface. This practice is quite aggressive and can require a week or more for recovery, depending upon tine size and spacing.

Sand topdressing – Sand topdressing is not necessarily considered a cultivation practice and sand is applied throughout the year on Florida golf courses. However, increased topdressing is applied throughout the summer months to dilute thatch and to backfill aeration holes. Budget constraints often limit its use to putting greens and tees, but sand topdressing dilutes thatch and improves surface firmness on fairways and approaches as well.

These practices are a bit messy and can temporarily produce unsightly playing surfaces, depending upon the intensity of each practice. Short-term inconvenience is certainly worth the long-term benefits that these practices provide.