

# Gearing up for a major tournament

BY VERN PUTNEY

While PGA Tour players sharpen their games in Hawaii after stops in California and Arizona, course superintendents at the next six sites are preparing welcome mats studded with stroke hazards.

The city of San Diego again hosts the Shearson Lehman Hutton Open on Feb. 16-19 at the 36-hole public course of Torrey Pines Golf Club in LaJolla, while superintendents work ahead to prepare the famed "Blue Monster" course at Doral Country Club in Miami, Eagle Trace CC in Coral Springs, Fla., Bay Hill Club and Lodge in Orlando, Fla., Sawgrass at Ponte Vedra, Fla., and English Turn Golf Course in New Orleans, La.

Torrey Pines, tailored to the blue-collar trade to the tune of 200,000 rounds annually, dons its whitest dress and brightest green for television.

SD's golf jewel will feature sand much lighter than usually seen on camera, varying beautifully in texture and color.

Bunkers that hadn't been sharply defined for perhaps 20 years will be so modified, pruned and trimmed by course superintendent John Walter that there will be no need to delay play while a PGA official is summoned to rule on possible grounds relief.

Much Bermuda grass was sown in the summer and permitted to grow unmolested. Otherwise, rough wouldn't be the prescribed height.

It's been difficult for Walter's staff of 16 to work around the crowds swarming the courses daily. The tourist season, which began after Christmas, lasts nine months.

However, tournament preparation began in November with gradual greens shaving. By tourney time, especially top-dressed and verti-cut greens will become smooth putting surfaces in the 9.5-10 stimp meter range.

Perennial rye grass, which Vincent says is "great filler grass and gets greener and prettier," will decorate green collars and avoid the appearance of clumpiness.

Four days before the two practice rounds, the 7,000-yard South course and the 6,600-

yard North layout will be closed to public play. Final grooming will take place.

A few hours after national showcasing at Torrey Pines, the course again will belong to those in the workaday world.

The Honda Classic at Eagle Trace on March 2-5 again looms as a test of Man against Wind. Superintendent Jeff Haley and assistant Ron Wright can't stay the high-velocity breeze hurtling down from the Everglades to the unprotected west and northwest, but they will have done their course homework.

Eight tons of rye grass has been deposited in the rough. "It's a little shaggy now, but hopefully fun to play," observes Haley.

Greens have been overseeded with rye grass, fairways have received the greens mower treatment, employees added to shag divots, traps hand-raked, especially greenside banks, tees groomed and protected at the tips and par-three tees given special attention.

The driving range, which covers about a half-acre, is ready to take a frightful beating from the practice-conscious field.

The Tournament of Players Championship's "island" 17th, the PGA Tour's picture hole in Jacksonville, will rivet the attention of the television public on March 16-19. At maximum 145 yards, it has spelled heartbreak for many a title contender. With the green entirely guarded by water, the gripping test of nerves frequently ends in fatal fascination as a challenger's ball sinks from sight.

A new spectator setup just behind the green will provide a closeup view of disaster, hairbreadth escapes and, possibly, cup-rattling shots.

All greens have been changed from bent to turfgrass. Ryegrass on all fairways will improve color and playability. Twenty tons of fertilizer have been deposited in the winter fertilization program as crews work around 150 to 200 players daily.

Course superintendent Fred Klauk hopes Florida's ideal winter weather holds. He spent three blustery seasons at Eagle Trace. His last two years at Sawgrass have been on

## PGA keeping supers busy

The PGA Tour schedule includes several tournaments planned during the next two months. They follow:

Feb. 2-5 — Nissan Los Angeles Open — Riviera CC, 1250 Capri Drive, Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Feb. 9-12 — Hawaiian Open, Waialae CC, 4997 Kahala Ave., Honolulu, Hawaii 96816.

Feb. 16-19 — Shearson Lehman Hutton Open, Torrey Pines GC, 11480 Torrey Pines, LaJolla, Calif. 92037

Feb. 23-26 — Doral Ryder Open, Doral CC, 4400 NW 87th Ave., Miami, Fla. March 2-5 — Honda Classic, TPC at Eagle Trace, 1111 Eagle Trace Blvd., Coral Springs, Fla. 33065

March 9-12 — The Nestle

Invitational, Bay Hill Club & Lodge, 9000 Bay Hill Blvd., Orlando, Fla. 32819

March 16-19 — The Players Championship, TPC at Sawgrass, 103 TPC Blvd., Ponte Vedra, Fla. 32082

March 23-26 — USF&G Classic, English Turn G&CC, One Clubhouse Drive, New Orleans, La. 70131

March 30-April 2 — Independent Insurance Agent Open, Tournament Players Course at The Woodlands, 1730 S. Millbend Dr., The Woodlands, Texas 77380

April 6-9 — The Masters, Augusta, Ga., National GC.

April 6-9 — Deposit Guaranty Golf Classic, Hattiesburg CC, Country Club Way, Hattiesburg, Miss. 39401

the wet side, but minus strong winds.

Unlike most superintendents who must scramble and step up their manpower to fine-tune their layouts, Steve Kuhn has things pretty much in place for the Doral Ryder Open., Feb. 23-26.

That's because the "Blue Monster," one of five under the Doral umbrella, as a resort course can be maintained year-round as a championship test.

Members and guests electing to tee it up there accept the challenge — close-cropped fairways, deep rough, fast greens.

More refinements will be made after PGA officials and Kuhn huddle, notably a transitional 7-foot-wide 1 1/4-inch collar cut between the half-inch fairway trim and the 2 1/2- to 3-inch rough. Basically, though, course personnel will remain the same — nine workers for each course, an in-house operation again expected to proceed smoothly.

Not that Kuhn is waiting until early February to prepare. He began an orderly tournament program in mid-December with painting and general sprucing up.

Overseeding the greens with bent grass was a prime project. "The pros consider

greens and the putting game the most important part of tourney play," said Kuhn. "They prefer fast greens, and we will oblige. They're the best players in the world, and we intend to maintain demanding conditions."

Last year, green speed measured 10.3 on the stimp meter. It will be about the same this time.

Kuhn began checking greens speed early in January. They'll start "high-high," about 5/16 of an inch, and dip to tourney standards in 1/64-inch increments.

So, while PGA officials set heights of green and rough, pin and bleacher locations, Kuhn and crews will handle remaining details.

"Actually, non-grass activity demands almost as much attention," noted Kuhn. "For instance, erection of a 'tent village' on the par-five 18th hole of the Red course. This sprawling complex accommodates corporate sponsors at \$25,000 a whack."

Then seven miles of rope must be placed to keep spectators from roaming into player territory and possibly running into a stray or sprayed shot.

Also, a 40- by 10-foot scoreboard is put in place in a pond to the side of the 18th fairway. A diver anchors this scoreboard so that CBS cameras can focus immediately on the latest scores.

At many tourneys, Boy Scouts and/or volunteer crews assist with divot replacement, trash collection and similar menial but important details.

For Kuhn and company, it remains a do-it-yourself project. About 300 receptacles are placed strategically.

Such independence is perhaps a reflection of Kuhn's background. Dad Joe, long a pro-super at Princeton Elks CC, W. Va., would don boots and work jeans at 6 a.m., get the maintenance crew started, and about 9 a.m. reappear in the pro shop in more formal shirt, slacks and white buck shoes. After a day of lessons would come dinner. Then it was back to the back of the pro shop, where he and son Steve, initially little bigger than a golf bag, cleaned clubs until 11 p.m.

English Turn's television debut March 23-26 at the USF&G Classic will be fascinating, declares superintendent Mitchell Wilkerson, because of its different look.

"This course was built for tourney play and will have length-type eye appeal," said Wilkerson. Two hundred palm trees have been planted.

Pros who have checked out English Turn like the layout. Mike Shea, PGA Tour official who played there with Wilkerson last November, added his stamp of approval.

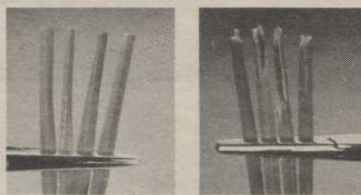
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