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Klauk superlative tutor to supers of the future

BY PETER BLAIS

Unlike many superintendents who claim they rarely play the game, Fred Klauk is a two-handicapper who brings his skills as a golfer to his work.

"I spend as much time as possible trying to teach my assistants how to care for a course from a golfer's point of view. I want them to know why we do the things we do. I've trained several people who are on golf courses of their own right now. I take a lot of pride in that," said the head superintendent at the Tournament Players Course at Sawgrass, Fla., the flagship course of the TPC fleet.

It was Klauk's ability as a teacher that impressed T.P. "Buck" Caldwell, special accounts manager with turf care products manufacturer Lesco, Inc., and led him to recommend Klauk as a candidate for the Super Focus feature.

"Fred has a real gift for nurturing and helping his employees learn the profession, just ask any of his assistants," wrote Caldwell. "They will quickly share that when Fred sends them out on the course, they know what to do, why they are doing it and how. Fred takes time from a very demanding schedule to share knowledge so that his

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Klauk

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personnel can develop their full potential." Klauk's schedule is demanding in a way a 6-month-old baby is demanding at feeding time. TPC Sawgrass gobbles up 12 hours a day, six days a week during most of the year. That almost doubles to 120 hours a week just prior to and during The Players Championship held annually in March.

"The job is a lot more demanding on your time than I ever would have thought. But I enjoy it very much," said Klauk, who entered the field 18 years ago.

Klauk, 40, was a scratch golfer in high school. He went to the University of Florida, though he never played on the golf team.

"That was back when the university was national champion. I might have been able to play at other schools, but not there," he said.

Still, Klauk knew his career would be tied to golf. He had no desire to be a pro, so he turned his attention toward becoming a superintendent, an occupation that was gaining in popularity and prestige in the early 1970s, he said.

He enrolled in the College of Agriculture, graduating in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in ornamental horticulture and a specialty in turfgrass management.

After graduation, Klauk remained in the Sunshine State, spending two years as superintendent at John's Island Club before moving on for a 9 1/2-year stint at Pine Tree Golf Club in Boynton Beach. The next stop was TPC at Eagle Trace for three years before settling in at Sawgrass in 1987.

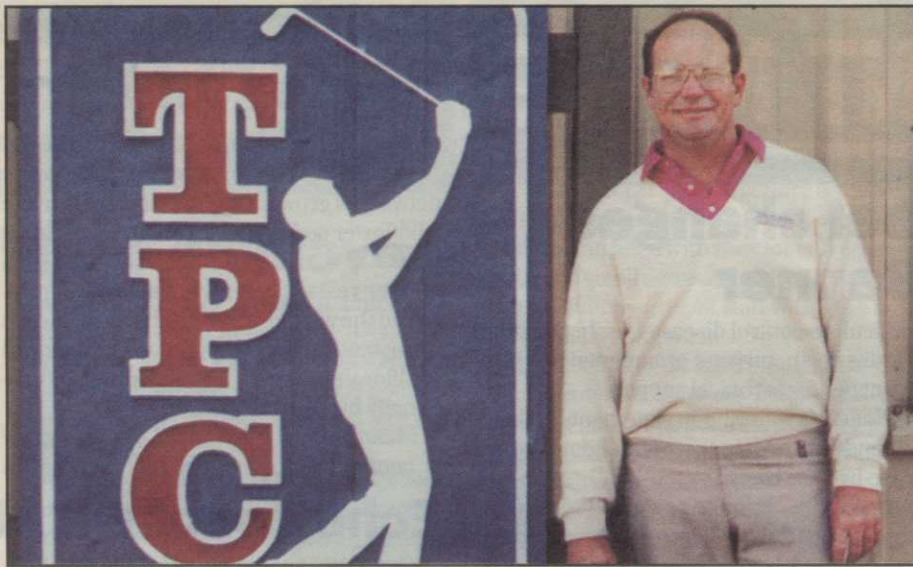
Klauk has helped host six PGA Tour events since joining the Tour staff.

"His knowledge of the game has helped him to continually modify and improve conditions of the (Sawgrass) course," said Cal Roth, director of golf course maintenance operations for the TPC.

Sawgrass is a Pete Dye-designed course. There are no fairway bunkers, but many sand and grass bunkers around the greens.

"They require a tremendous amount of hand labor," Klauk explained. "We have 14 Flymos (a floating, air-cushioned mower) for the bunker faces.

"They (bunkers) are nearly vertical in na-



Fred Klauk outside TPC at Sawgrass, Fla.

ture. There's no riding mower you could conceivably use on them.

"There's nothing easy about maintaining this course. It's similar to PGA West in concept. It's a very high-maintenance course. We have 16 full-time people to do it."

But Klauk enjoys the challenge and has no intention of moving on. "I enjoy what I do. I'll stay as long as they care to have me," he said.

If you know of an outstanding golf course superintendent who is overdue for peer recognition, please let us know. *Golf Course News* welcomes nominations.

Super Focus is a monthly feature.

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