

Fast Faster Fastest

By Kit Bradshaw

Kenova Construction Co. — creator of the “95-day miracle” — has gotten even faster.

The West Palm Beach, Fla., firm that built an 18-hole course in 95 working days in 1989 has cranked it up a notch, using its experience to make its “fast-track” approach an Indy Speedway method.

With major doses of pre-planning and coordination, and an army of professionals, Kenova needed just 101 days to build the 18-hole Queenstown (Md.) Harbor Golf Links, mass-grade and rough-shape a third nine holes, finish the driving range and practice green, and build another developer’s five-hole course nearby.

The feat in 1989 — Carillon in Plainfield, Ill. — was dubbed “a 95-day miracle.”

Owner Lex Birney called the Queenstown construction “a blitz.”

Golf course architect Lindsay Ervin termed it “beautiful.”

Skeptics might question the quality of a course built so quickly. Yet Carillon and Queenstown Harbor officials alike said they got a high-caliber courses.

The “fast-track” system employed by Kenova is not a theory. It’s a fact President Steve Balogh is proving — again and again.

Queenstown Harbor was built, from start to planting, between Aug. 6 and Nov. 30, and will open July 1. The five-hole course, Fairview Links, on a private estate, was built entirely within the month of October and was expected to be ready for play in May or June.

Balogh said the firm got a late start at Queenstown Harbor because of permitting problems.

“Basically, our fast-track system is nothing more than great teamwork,” he said.

The course is on 750 acres of farmland owned for decades by the Birney family. It is

located on the Chester River, a tributary to Chesapeake Bay.

The 160-acre course is situated among critical wetlands, and as a result, much of the soil is wet, and had to be dewatered. The wetlands are part of the beauty of the course, but their existence also extended the permitting process and forced an extensive effort to preserve and protect them.

By the time Kenova began work on Aug. 6, its goal was to have the project seeded before winter set in.

Kenova met the goal.

By the end of November, the 18-hole course, driving range and practice green were planted and ready for the winter germination period, and the second nine holes were ready for seeding this spring.

KEEPING PULSE OF THE JOB

The trick to getting the work done — and maintaining quality — is twofold. Kenova sets up an exceptionally coordinated plan of action, and brings in approximately 125 people who work nearly dawn to dusk, seven days a week, during the construction period.

This speed is possible because of extensive preplanning, according to Bill Zabel, president of Ryan Inc. Eastern, the mass-grading and excavation company that worked with Kenova on Queenstown Harbor.

“You can’t just get out there with the equipment and expect it to happen,” Zabel said.

“Before the project is started, you plan how things will interface. You do a week-by-week plan, and sometimes a daily plan. You do this with the cooperation of everyone involved. You get the key people around a table building the entire project on paper before they go out into the field.

“And you maintain a critical path system



An aerial view shows the beauty of Queenstown Golf Links’ surroundings. The 750-acre site in Queenstown, Md., has been owned for generations by Lex Birney’s family and he hired Kenova Construction Co. to turn it into a golf course.

throughout the project. During the job, we had an administrator at the project, with a computer set up in the office. He tracked all the production and created data bases of information, so he had the pulse of the job at any given time.”

To maintain the timetable, it was important for key players to be available. Golf course architect Ervin was on site an average of three days a week, so design decisions could be made in the field.

“We had the plans finished as they started construction,” Ervin said. “Being on site helped Kenova and Ryan facilitate the schedule. As problems came up, we could make a decision, and the work was done immediately.”

In addition, there were weekly meetings of the architect, golf course professional, superintendent, civil engineer and construction people throughout the project to keep the schedule on line. This interaction was crucial, Ervin said.

“One thing that makes us unique,” Balogh said, “is our shapers. They all play golf. They understand what a golf course needs to be. The shapers can look at a set of plans and totally visualize what the holes will look like. They are artists with bulldozers.”

These bulldozers and other machinery moved 450,000 cubic yards of dirt and created nine lakes on the property during construction.

None of it could have been done, Birney said, without everyone’s coordination.

“You could bring in a lot of people and create a god-awful mess. But to Kenova, this is an organizational task. It’s not the typical way a course is built.”

Balogh said this “fast track” system evolved by necessity.

“We got into a couple of instances where the owner and developer requested a fast track,” he said. “I studied the whole scenario and figured out that it’s nothing more than having the machinery and qualified, capable people doing the work.

“The secret is to have enough supervision, qualified people ... and total coordination during the life of the project.”

DEVELOPER NEEDED SPEED

The fast-track system was important to Birney.

“We had had some significant opposition to the project, so when we started, we wanted to make our presence known with as much impact as possible,” Birney said. “We also wanted to stabilize the property as soon as we could because of the environmental aspects.

“Finally, there were the financial considerations of the project. It was important to us to have it buttoned up as quickly as possible to begin creating revenues.”

Balogh said the cost of construction itself is about the same as with a slower schedule, but in the long run, the developer profits.

“Usually, you build one season and then put in the grass, and the course isn’t playable until the third year,” Balogh said. “But when we get it all seeded, it’s playable by the second year.

“If they are building homes, then the course helps them sell the homes, because the potential homeowner can see where he wants to build. If it’s a public course, such as Queenstown Harbor, the owner can build his revenues faster.”

Birney said the quality of the course is very high and he’s happy it will be opening July 1. “If I had to do it over again, I’d consider doing it with these same contractors,” he said.

Balogh said: “During the time we were working on Queenstown, the course architect for a very private five-hole course saw us working and was intrigued by the fast construction and the quality of work we were doing. As a result, we were hired to create this five-hole course in the same area — and we completed it in 25 days. It’s a very unusual little course. It can be played in 12 different ways.”

Balogh said his company’s fast-track system is generating a lot of interest.

“I think our company is more in demand because of our ability to provide a service on a fast schedule, while keeping the quality in the project. We take a lot of pride in that,” he said.

Kit Bradshaw is a contributing editor based in Jupiter, Fla.

AquaGro® Advantage

The Hot Shot For Hot Spots.



Advantage is AquaGro® soil wetting agent molded into a solid pellet. Instead of syringing with plain water, pop an AquaGro Advantage Pellet into an applicator and quickly move water into the rootzone.

- Touch up problem spots easily.
- Turf safety in any weather.

Available from your AquaGro distributor.

The Advantage System
AquaGro Advantage Pellets
AquaGro Advantage Applicator

AQUATROLS
The Water Management People
1-800-257-7797