

Klimm takes Ridge Club through storms — literally

Things are finally coming around for Mark Klimm, both maintenance-wise and equipment-wise.

Having been around golf courses since he was 14 and worked summers at Hyannisport Golf Course, Klimm has taken his accumulated knowledge to The Ridge Club, a new 18-hole championship golf course on upper Cape Cod, Mass.

He is superintendent at the 6,641-yard, par 71 course, which has been nominated as one of the country's top new courses by Golf Digest magazine.

Although the Robert von Hagge-designed The Ridge Club course opened July 4, 1990, the previous owners got into financial difficulties. Last spring, the course was bought by Cape Cod Golf Properties, Inc., which owns the adjoining Holly Ridge public golf course.

Klimm, the superintendent at Ballymeade Country Club in Falmouth, Mass., for three years, came on board in April, along with the new owners.

With a 15-man staff, he immediately began an intensive program to prepare the course for the season, including filling out his line of turf maintenance equipment. The previous owners had acquired some equipment, but not enough to properly or efficiently maintain the course.

Klimm's efforts were almost derailed by Hurricane Bob, which roared through the Cape in mid-August. The course lost approximately 500 trees, but fortunately got little rain and no flooding. The pines and oak trees that surround the course showed considerable "salt burn" from the hurricane-force winds coming in off the Atlantic Ocean. The turf had some browning in spots, but it lasted only a few days.

"We were able to get the back nine holes open two days after Bob went

through," Klimm said. His crews had downed branches and tree limbs cleared off so the full course was playable by the weekend.

Klimm's goal is maintaining the course at a championship level. So, when he started searching the market for the equipment he needed, he spent a lot of time last spring looking and watching equipment at work.

He ended up with a "package" of equipment, and now advocates that approach for superintendents.

"I talked with golf course superintendents in New York and New Jersey who were very pleased with their Ransomes equipment, so I began checking it out. Their local representative was extremely cooperative in demonstrating their equipment for us. In fact, both the dealer and the district sales manager spent a lot of time working with us, helping figure out the best combination of machines for our needs," he said.

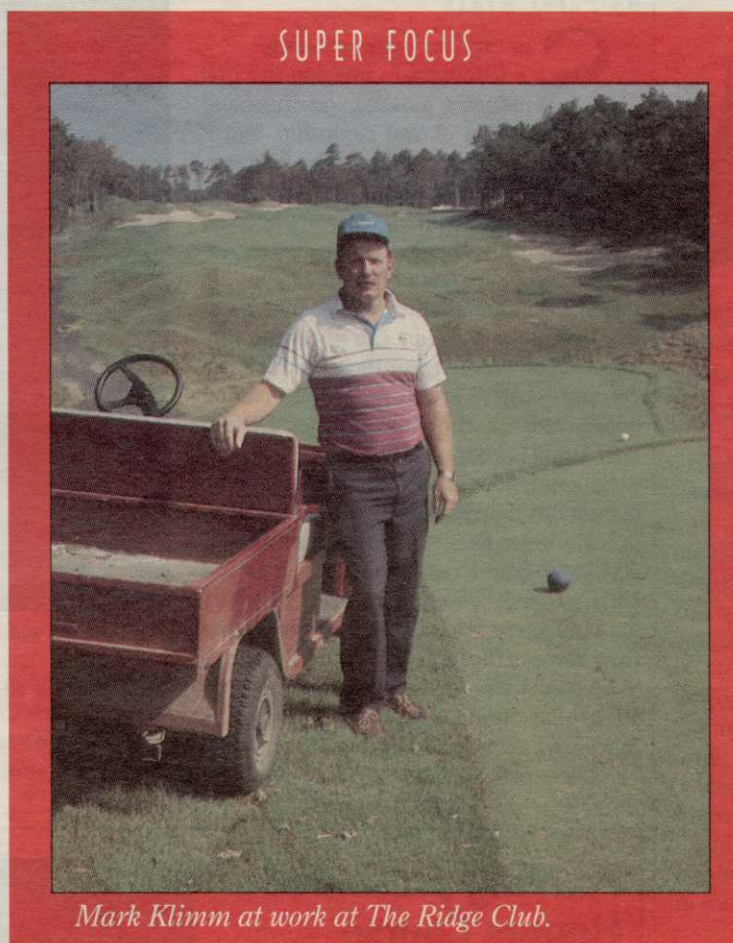
"They brought in several pieces of equipment and we tried them all."

Klimm and his staff tested a number of equipment combinations before finally deciding on the package that would best fit their turf maintenance program.

Klimm said one advantage to buying most of a course's equipment from the same manufacturer is ease of service. "It simplifies our own parts inventory. And, it makes it easier for our mechanic to get familiar with one primary brand."

"We get to know the dealer better, so we can count on him for prompt service. We've needed parts a couple times and he has had them shipped in overnight from the factory."

The Ridge Course greens, tees and fairways are all bentgrass, with a bluegrass-fescue mix in the roughs. Some



Mark Klimm at work at The Ridge Club.

native grasses were left in the roughs, to reduce the amount of maintenance time required.

Surprisingly, the base soil is a heavy clay. "Soils are more sandy closer to the shore, but we're far enough inland that the course sits on a vein of clay that runs through the middle of the Cape," Klimm said.

"They moved a lot of clay when the course was built. Clay was used to build up the many mounds and berms on the course, as well as for the roadbeds."

Cape sand, washed and screened, was hauled in for the greens and

traps. The greens were constructed to United States Golf Association standards.

Greens are mowed daily, to 5/32-inch height. During the busy summer season, greens are mowed with walking mowers. Spring and fall, Klimm's crews cut greens with their two riding triplex mowers.

Tees are mowed four times a week, to 3/8-inch, with walking mowers. Fairways are also mowed four times weekly, to 7/16-inch height. Roughs are mowed twice a week, except for the native grass areas, and kept to about two inches

high. Rough mowing is handled by a triplex mower.

"We've got mounds more like you'd find on some of the Sunbelt courses," said Klimm.

Although precipitation on the Cape averages 44 inches annually, the Ridge Course has a fully automatic sprinkler irrigation system. "It can get really dry in July and August some years," said Klimm.

He has already aerated the fairways once, and planned on going over fairways again this fall. "Since the greens are new, we haven't aerated them yet, but we'll probably plan on coring them at least once a year and more often if necessary."

The Ridge Club has more than 100 members already and plans on as many as 350 eventually. Building in the club's residential areas is underway, with some homes completed and others under construction.

"I anticipate we'll have 20,000 to 25,000 rounds of golf per season when the club is full," Klimm said. "No matter how much play, however, we intend to keep the course at a championship level."

A 1975 graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, with a degree in agronomy, Klimm returned home to Cape Cod as assistant superintendent at New Seabury Country Club. Three years later, he was appointed superintendent for Holden Hills Country Club, just north of Worcester, Mass.

Four years later, he was back on the Cape at New Seabury CC, this time as superintendent. In 1988 he joined Ballymeade while it was under construction.

A past president of the Cape Cod Turf Managers Association, he is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the GCSA of New England.



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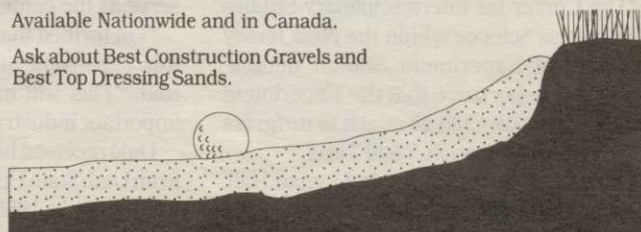
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