

USGA thrilled with Pebble Beach

By Frank Pollard

While discussions continue between the California Coastal Commission and Pebble Beach Co. over private membership plans as they relate to public access to the course, restoration of Pebble Beach Golf Links and its preparation for the 1992 U.S. Open is on schedule.

The year-long, massive facelift of the course has been successful as Pebble Beach Co. has brought the course back to its original linksland look and challenging qualities. At the same time, with the June 1992 U.S. Open looming close on the horizon, the stringent course requirements of the United States Golf Association have nearly all been met.

More than 70 years of substantial public and tournament play had caused many subtle changes throughout the golf course. Greens, bunkers and tee sizes, shapes and locations had changed over the decades and an enormous infestation of Kikuyugrass in fairways, collars, aprons, tees and roughs was rampant.

Eradication of the Kikuyugrass, a noxious weed, was mandatory. It is very nearly unplayable since the golf ball doesn't roll well and tends to nestle deep in its tough stolons (above-ground stems/runners), presenting tricky lies that make it almost impossible to hit the ball out in many cases. The course, in fact, had generally suffered from neglect over a period of time.

Kikuyugrass has been eradicated and the 18 fairways reseeded in

perennial ryegrass, with the assistance of golf course architect Jack Nicklaus, and under Director of Golf Operations Ed Miller and Pebble Beach superintendent Brad Hines.

A thorough renovation of all greens (including reclaiming putting surfaces lost over the years to encroaching rough on their perimeter), collars, tees and bunkers has restored them to meet the original 1919 design of architects Jack Neville and Douglas Grant.

The 4th, 5th and 7th greens have been entirely reconstructed to USGA specifications. A unique heating system was installed beneath the heavily shaded 5th green to maintain soil temperature and assure good grass growth during the cold winter months.

After a recent USGA inspection, the team of USGA President C. Grant Spaeth; former USGA President Frank "Sandy" Tatum, who had assisted Neville in making minor course changes prior to the 1972 Open; Tom Meeks, USGA Director of rules and competitions; Tim Moraghan, USGA championship course agronomist; and Ron Reed, USGA manager of regional affairs, was enthusiastic about the progress.

"Our recent walk-through (October) was to assess the current condition of the course and the progress that has been made, and to establish various parameters such as fairway widths; cutting heights of the fairways, primary roughs and intermediate roughs; condition and consistency of the greens; and other course prepara-

tion guidelines for the 1992 Open," said Spaeth. "We are right on schedule and actually, the course looks to be in absolutely wonderful condition.

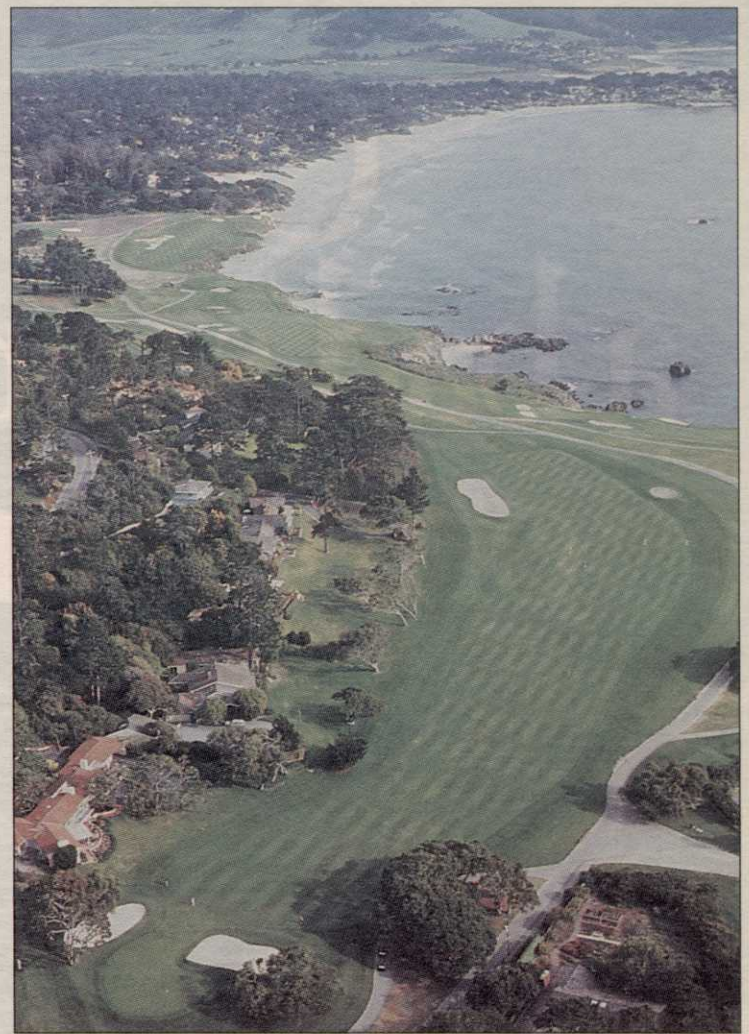
"The cooperation of the Pebble Beach people — company President Tom Oliver, Vice President of Golf Paul Spengler (also U.S. Open general chairman), Ed Miller and Brad Hines and their staffs has been marvelous and they have done a superb job. All we really have to do from here on in is fine-tune it."

Other USGA team members, in complete agreement with Spaeth, also commented on the course's superior condition and the confidence the USGA has in the Pebble Beach staff and its accomplishments in bringing the course back into such magnificent shape.

Miller has nothing but praise for the enormous amount of work as well as the caliber of the work accomplished by his Pebble Beach grounds-keeping staff and U.S. Open project crew in a relatively short time.

"We've made tremendous progress this past year and the credit belongs entirely to the dedication of our exceptionally fine crew of people working out on the course," Miller said. "Most people thought the eradication of the Kikuyugrass alone was an insurmountable task.

That, coupled with our total course restoration program, plus meeting the requirements of U.S. Open course conditioning, made our work even more difficult. Yet, our crews managed to complete their demanding assignments and



Pebble Beach's 14th hole is typical of the condition of the course today, with firm, dense and close-cropped perennial ryegrass fairways; fast, consistent and true *poa annua* greens; and beautifully sculptured and playable bunkers set along the precipitous and rugged cliffs of Carmel Bay bordering the Pacific.

objectives very successfully, with minimal interruption or disturbance of daily play.

"Restoration is very nearly complete," said Miller, "with only minor tasks to be wrapped up. The fine-tuning of the course for the Open will, however, continue over the next few months and we have

every reason to expect that it will be in the best shape it's ever been by the time the Open rolls around."

The public, AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am touring pros and 1992 U.S. Open field will now be seeing the course as the original classic design dictated and players of the past saw it and played it.

Rygg's chore at Squaw Creek is a no-chemical attack

Continued from page 17

nance management practices obsolete.

This challenge intrigued Rygg from the outset. Rygg is familiar with working under restrictive conditions. His previous work place was The Links at Spanish bay in Monterey, Calif. This Robert Trent Jones Jr. course was constructed on the site of an abandoned sand pit just north of Pebble Beach.

Rygg's challenge there was both reclamation of the dunes destroyed by the mining operations and the protection of the existing fragile dune environment. Many controls were imposed by the California Coastal Commission, but they paled to the specifics imposed at the Resort at Squaw Creek.

"My job is to develop a plan to grow the healthiest stand of turf possible," Rygg said. "My plan is to create the best possible situation, through soil analysis and bringing the soil into balance, to make the necessary elements and nutrients available to the turf plant. By developing healthy turf, I can help it fight off disease and other pest infestations.

"I am not anti-chemical at all. In

fact, I know they are very advantageous and cost-effective for controls on specific problems," Rygg explained. "But I must work within the framework of the management plan that governs this course."

The typical plan at the mountain courses in the High Sierra calls for use of fungicides on greens through the winter months to prevent snow mold that develops under the snowpack as the soil warms up.

The Resort at Squaw Creek is limited to only the use of one fungicide, Chloroneb, and this product is not available in California as it does not meet the state label requirements for use. In an attempt to locate Chloroneb, Rygg found only enough available to treat half of the greens for one winter.

He covered all greens with course covers and will begin to hand clear the greens in March as the soils begin to warm up to a temperature that will allow the growth of molds.

"There will be a high labor cost for all of these programs," Rygg said. "We could see anywhere from two to six feet of snow on portions of the golf course as March is a high snow month historically."

As spring melt exposes the grass,



Carl Rygg

Rygg won't have the advantage of hitting the course with soluble nitrogen to kick the grass into growth. Instead it will take a diligent close-down effort in the fall of cutting back irrigation and fertilizer to harden off the turf before the first snows.

Rygg foresees the possibility of having to resod areas on greens and landing areas of the fairways that may succumb to snow mold.

"With such a short playing season here, I can't justify having patches of the greens unplayable as

we wait for new turf to grow in," he said.

Through the summer months, the course will become a living laboratory as Rygg works on new ideas to use modern-day products that will work in a restrictive maintenance program.

He plans to use wetting agents to help with areas of hydrophobic soils. He will use biostimulants to help develop good balance in the soils. And he will use one of the most labor-intensive programs imaginable.

The course is restricted to only 80 acres of fertilized and cultivated turf, but Rygg will begin with a staff of 25 workers. Many of them will begin work in March and be busy through November, even though the course itself won't open for players until mid-May.

The course went through its first winter last year and the double whammy of warm weather through January and February, followed by more than nine feet of snow in March, produced perfect conditions for severe damage from molds.

Rygg was happy with how the young grass pulled through this first shock and learned much about

the fickle Sierra weather. After a brief warm-up in April, the golf course was still receiving snowstorms and cold temperatures in May.

"We had some spot damage out of that first thaw and we got a better feeling of how the snowpack varies. This is going to help in the future in knowing what areas we need our attention first."

The Resort at Squaw Creek and the work of Carl Rygg is already drawing scrutiny by golf industry officials as he begins to find ways to maintain a course without pesticides, herbicides and fungicides.

The techniques he develops could pave the way for modern maintenance techniques for the next century. But Rygg keeps this futuristic view in perspective.

"I really look at the program that I am developing in Squaw Valley as a step forward into the past to a time when chemical use was not as prevalent as it is today," Rygg explained. "I think there is much to be learned from the old-fashioned methods to encourage healthy turf. And I know that sound cultural practices and good old-fashioned hard hand labor can make the difference."