

Paul Barratt — keeping perfect conditions for test facility

By DAVE BUCHANAN

Paul Barratt usually takes some good-natured kidding when he gets together with fellow golf course superintendents. That's because while they are tending 36, 18 or nine greens on their courses, Barratt has just a single putting surface to maintain.

"Some of them take a little pleasure in saying: 'A certified superintendent taking care of a one-hole course?'" Barratt said, with obvious good humor. "But I think I get the last laugh because I have not heard a member complain in three years."

Barratt is superintendent at Titleist and Foot-Joy Worldwide's Manchester Lane Test Facility in Acushnet, Mass. Here Titleist tests new ball and club designs before offering them to the public.

Barratt knows about dealing with members. Before joining Titleist, he was a superintendent in New York, Connecticut and Mas-

Dave Buchanan is former marketing communications writer for Jacobsen Division of Textron.

sachusetts. He spent 15 years at the Country Club of New Bedford (Mass.) before agreeing to supervise construction and maintain Manchester Lane in 1989.

And although his "course" consists of just one green, three fairways, and three tees, conditions here must match those found on the best courses in the world.

"What the research department at Titleist is concerned about is a ball's carry and roll," Barratt said. "So they are looking for a flat surface, comparable to championship conditions, something they're going to get accurate data on."

Barratt says Manchester Lane allows Titleist to do much of its testing under ideal conditions.

Included in this 20-acre facility is a 10,000-square-foot green with both flat and sloped putting surfaces. A second, 50-by-150-foot green is under construction.

Manchester Lane's seven acres of bentgrass fairways are divided into two parallel 365-yard landing areas, leading up to the green. A third fairway intersects them, with a 2,500-square-foot bentgrass tee box fronting each.

Barratt said this configuration lets researchers conduct tests regardless of wind direction.

"We have two tees facing each other for those times when they want to test into a head wind. The intersecting fairway is used if there's a swirling wind. We have a tree background."

The fairways are a power golfer's dream. All are straight with no hazards. But the clover leaf-shaped right bunker, one of two protecting the green, gives the golfer a different experience each time his ball hits the beach.

"One lobe is mason sand, the other two are silica sand," Barratt said. "We want to test balls and clubs using the different sands common to the United States."

NORMAL PROCEDURES

Despite Manchester Lane's smallness, Barratt uses the same maintenance procedures and equipment as at top clubs.

"The green was built to USGA specs. We do everything comparable to a normal green," he said.

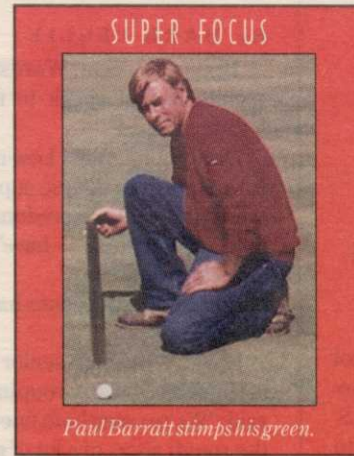
The major difference between this green and most others is its usage, or lack of it.

"We don't get the traffic that normal greens would get, so we have to compensate for that by rolling. We use this green for putter testing, so obviously we want it comparable to a green you'd find on a golf course," he said.

For testing, a quality cut and consistent surface are vital.

"We're using a walk-behind greens mower with a turf conditioner, Barratt said. "We cut five days a week. We start at 5/32nds of an inch and lower it to 1/8 inch. We top dress it, roll it, and maintain it as a championship course."

On the fairways, as on the greens, standard golf course



spraying pesticides," he said.

FREQUENT VISITORS

Given the frequency of the testing done here by both professional and amateur golfers, Manchester Lane is often on display. Golfers use every part of the course for testing, so every part has to play well in addition to looking good.

"Most of them hit off the tee, either for prototype ball or club testing. But we've had pros here hitting wedges, hitting irons, putter testing. It depends on what we are developing at the time," Barratt said. "I think every pro who's been in here has been impressed with the looks and the conditions."

STAYING CURRENT

Barratt's departure from the everyday grind of golf course management doesn't mean he's dropped out of superintendent society. He still attends golf shows to stay up-to-date on equipment and turf maintenance techniques. He also serves on the board of the Cape Cod Turf Managers Association.

Except during growing season, Barratt maintains the facility by himself.

But Barratt is happy he doesn't have to face the Monday morning quarterbacks fellow supers see.

"I don't have to worry about the guy who watched TV Sunday coming in and saying: 'How come our course doesn't look like that?' or 'My brother-in-law is doing this on his lawn.' My job isn't easy but it's certainly not as difficult as the people out there fighting the directors and members."

So Barratt takes a little good-natured ribbing about being superintendent at a one-hole golf course. But if asked, he'd probably say he doesn't mind the joking.



Paul Barratt's domain: Titleist and Foot-Joy Worldwide test facility.

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Int'l symposium to encompass water progress

CINCINNATI — The North American Lake Management Society's (NALMS) 12th annual International Symposium, geared to protecting and enhancing surface water quality, will be held here Nov. 2-7.

While many of the workshop topics will be highly technical, there will be many presentations for volunteers who monitor water quality.

The symposium comes during the 20-year Clean Water Act, which is under review and revision by Congress.

A host of Ohio researchers, educators and consultants will deliver presentations, as will experts from around the world.

Conference co-chair Elizabeth Buchanan said the conference "will provide an excellent opportunity to look at the progress we have made in protecting, managing and restoring our surface waters during the last decade."

More information is available from NALMS, One Progress Blvd., Box 27, Alachua, Fla. 32615; 904-462-2554.