

Bator to draw on past while building future as consultant

PENFIELD, N.Y. — Richard M. Bator, who has earned acclaim for his work as superintendent at Oak Hill Country Club and Pine Valley and Merion golf clubs, has opened his own consulting business.

Bator, who has also designed and built two golf courses, said he will offer expertise on conversion programs from poa annua to bentgrass; course restoration; new course construction, from pre-construction to grow-in specifications; and customized programs to fill particular needs.

"My intention is to service all ranges of

clubs, from low- to medium- and high-profile clubs, along with a special interest in public or municipal courses," Bator said. "I will also work with an architect of a new club for grow-in specifications and in preparation of operating and capital budgets for the club and future maintenance program schedules."

Bator said he expects to help especially

"private ownership clubs, mom-and-pop courses — lower-budget clubs where the superintendent needs more guidance.

"There is a big need [for consultants] at public courses, maybe moreso than at the high-profile private clubs."

Bator said he often called in other superintendents and university scientists when he

had agronomic trouble on his course. He hopes to pass along the knowledge he gained the last 25 years.

"A second set of eyes, a fresh face is very important," he said.

Bator was superintendent at Oak Hill from 1977 until moving to Pine Valley in 1983. He left in 1986 to design and build Blue Heron Hills Country Club and Gypsum Mills Country Club, then took the superintendent post at Merion in 1989.

Bator is located at 210 Willow Pond Way, Penfield, N.Y. 14526; telephone 716-377-3026.

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Tour of Duty

Wideman

paths. The new irrigation system [Network 8000 from Toro] is working out great. We always had a center-line system that didn't get the rough. Now we go treeline to treeline.

"We also have the traditional Harbor Town striping. The same guy has done it for years. Our fairways are very wet so I went to the lightweight mowers last year. It's really helped... Extra mowing is the biggest thing we do. It goes from once or twice a week to everything every day. We have small greens here and our green-side slopes, up until last year, were pretty long. Now we mow 'em tight so the ball rolls away from the green."

Made-for-TV preparations: "The old cart paths were 25 to 30 years old and pretty beat up. We tried to keep the new ones out of sight of TV, but most of them don't come into play on the TV holes anyway... On our 14th hole — a par 3 over water — we always have nursery-grown azaleas. We bring them in on Wednesday night before the pro-am day. We have a lot of azaleas growing naturally on the course, but they're never in bloom during the tournament."

Crouch

hitting down to the green. You couldn't see the whole putting surface before. We also wanted to create more spectator mounding. Eventually we'll be doing the same sort of renovation on most of the greens here.

"We also redid the bunkers around 18. We have steep, sand-faced bunkers here. They look great, but we decided to flatten them out and grass the faces. The wash down is awful with the steep faces and it hurts the consistency of the sand, which is one of our biggest complaints. Eventually, we'll be redoing all of the bunkers like this."

Made-for-TV preparations: "Our course changes a great deal for the tournament. When people see it on TV, it's not what's here most of the year. Because we play on overseeded ryegrass, we have 4- to 6-inch rough, U.S. Open-type rough. We also use lightweight fairway mowers for striping.

"We're actually fortunate with the weather because our tournament got moved. We used to be the week before the Masters. Now we're two weeks after, which means much better weather. But the new schedule does mess up our aerifying schedule."

Link

well."

Made-for-TV preparations: "I try to establish my mowing patterns early, about the middle of March, well in advance of the tournament. If you establish different cuts early — like with the intermediate rough — the distinction is really there for TV. On the par-3 16th, during tournament week, I mow with a triplex in the direction of the camera, which is set up right behind the green. That way the TV really picks up the striping effect.

"We also add sand to the bunkers in December, so it will have time to firm up. We don't do a whole lot of extra landscaping [for the tournament] because the motif here at the Woodlands is very natural. But the Shell people put some flowers around the 14th tee box in the shape of a big shell."

Editor's note: "Tour of Duty" is a regular feature this year in Golf Course News. It is designed to celebrate the PGA Tour's unsung, underpublicized hero: The superintendent.

What You See.



Photography location courtesy of Marriot's Marco Island Resort and Golf Club.