

# O n T he G reen

## 48 hours — Not the movie

By MARK LESLIE

OVERLAND PARK, Kansas — Nobody's scoffing at Sandy Queen any longer. Not after he accomplished the impossible, stripping and resodding two greens at Overland Park Golf Course and returning them to play in two days.

Queen, manager of golf operations for the city's three courses, said a club

member who had been involved in a private club's green resodding project just laughed when Queen announced his 48-hour plans. But Queen, head superintendent/mechanical guru August Lietzen, and their crews proved all the skeptics wrong.

"In 24 hours you could hardly see the seams [of the sod]," Queen said. A day later, 175 to 200 golfers played the new greens.

"I was pleasantly surprised it was able to withstand play that quickly without any difficulties with the turf. It was probably more of a relief than a surprise," Queen said. "We try to set high standards, and I think if you spend the time in planning and organizing, you can do most things. The question was whether the plan would translate into being able to play on the turf that quickly."

The keys to success for Overland Park included a large (15-man) crew to remove the sod, wide (18-inch) rolls of sod, and a barbecue fork. But you can toss the fork, said Queen, convinced that the rest of the process is so effective, the fork is unneeded.

"We were looking for a way to expedite the process and minimize the downtime to our golf course," Queen said. "We found it."

Indeed, the process has been completed twice the last two years — two greens at a time — and the program has been improved from start (in the nursery) to finish (no top dressing is done until a week later).

Step by step, Overland Park's refined plan, which also restored the original contours of the greens, follows:

- First, establish a nursery. "The original size of our greens was 8,000 square feet. We established a 20,000-square-foot nursery."



Crew members at Overland Park (Kan.) Golf Course help roll out the green carpet in their record-time sodding program.

- Pick the best time of year for the project. "On the greens, we had original rooting in two days and knitdown in five days. So late-September timing was very good for us," Queen said. Temperatures were in the high 50s at night and the low-to-mid-70s in day.

- Examine the green profile and correct any problems before laying sod down on a bad area.

- Outline the original contours, and have a large crew remove the sod, starting at the centers of the greens and working out. Queen's 15-man crew, armed with sod cutters, removed the sod to a depth of 1-1/2 inches in about four hours.

- Run a Verti-Drain over the green "rather severely to break up the subsurface before putting the sod down. That works well."

- Put down a starter fertilizer.

- Cut strips of sod (Queen's was 3/4 inch thick) into 95-foot lengths. Roll them up with landscape tempers and load them onto utility vehicles to be transported to the greens.

- Here's where Lietzen's ingenuity saved the project. Since the rolls of sod were too heavy for less than a four-man crew to unroll, "August mechanized the process," Queen said. Lietzen rigged a

tractor bar on the back of a tractor to hold the roll. Plywood was laid down as far apart as the tires on the tractor. The tractor was driven down the plywood highway, so as not to disturb contours, and the sod unrolled.

A tip here: "With long rolls, the sod tends to build up in front of you and you have to pull it back to keep the sod tight. Basically, you cut a 90-foot roll in the nursery and it lays out to about 100 feet."

- After the sod is laid, take a two-by-four and press the edges of one roll firmly against the roll beside it.

"It became very easy to lay it down. The crew size kept getting smaller and smaller," Queen said, until "We had two people cutting the sod, two hauling it, two rolling it out, and one person interfacing the edges to the existing turf."

- Optional: Knit the rolls together. "Originally, we took barbecue forks and knit the rolls together. Basically, you center the fork over the two seams, give it a twist, and it interlocks the sod," Queen said. "It did an excellent job and was a pretty quick process, but I don't think now that it was necessary."

- Water the sod as quickly as possible — "a key to our success."

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The new Turfgrass Science Museum will be dedicated to Thomas Mascaro, left, and Eberhard Steiniger.

## Penn State has Turfgrass Science Museum in works

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — Pennsylvania State University and The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council have announced a new Turfgrass Science Museum will be dedicated to Thomas Mascaro and Eberhard Steiniger. The museum will be named the Mascaro/Steiniger Turfgrass Museum.

The 40,000-square-foot museum is being constructed on the Penn State campus and will display many inventions, including those developed by

Mascaro and the collection of Steiniger. The need for a museum was conceived by Dr. Joseph Duich, now retired from Penn State.

Mascaro was president of West Point Products for 55 years. In 1986 he and his son, John, formed Turf-Tec International which designs diagnostic turfgrass instruments for golf course superintendents to obtain factual information. The business is located in Oakland Park, Fla.

Steiniger was golf course

superintendent at Pine Valley Golf Club in Clementon, N.J., for 57 years. Steiniger collaborated with Mascaro on more than 20 inventions in testing and evaluating their performance. His private collection of equipment will also be on display.

The formal dedication of the museum will be held at the Penn State Turfgrass Field Days, Aug. 10-11. For more information, contact Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council, P.O. Box 1078, Lemont, Pa. 16851-1078; 814-863-3475.

## Quick sod

Continued from previous page

Afterward, Overland Park's maintenance schedule included "periodic mowing to get it down to [desired playing] height as soon as possible," Queen said. "We did not aerify until the next spring.

"In our new process we are immediately going in with a pre-emergent because the reason we renovated in the first place was the amount of poa annua we have. We've also integrated a turf growth regulator and it seems to fight the poa off the greens."

Queen recommended top dressing be delayed for a week after laying the sod. He did top dress and said, "It caused a sand layer across the seam and developed a slight ridge area that took 30 days to top dress it out."

While Queen found that using 18-inch rolls "significantly reduces the cross-seams on the green and greatly shrinks the size of the crew necessary," Lietzen has made a 30-inch sod blade to use this fall.

"This will reduce 75 percent of the seams," Queen reported.

No one in Overland Park is scoffing any longer. Plus, the reputation of the course, which plays 75,000 rounds a year, is intact.

"Being a public course, our philosophy is to be always open. We don't think we can get away with temporary greens for three or four months," Queen said. "If we closed nine holes it would cost us about \$3,000 a day. But more important is, what does it do to your reputation for the next two years? Whenever a golf course closes for renovation, people get the mind set that it is under construction and they steer away from it. Then, after the course opens up, people are used to visiting other facilities. We don't want them going anywhere else."

The project's total cost? "Not much," Queen said. "We built the nursery and spent \$400 to \$500 in sod blades.

"But, mostly, the results were successful because the staff was allowed, and had the initiative, to come up with ideas to improve the entire process."

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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