

Tour of Duty

NEIL "BUSTER" BUSTAMANTE

Mauni Lani Resort
Kohala Coast, Hawaii
Senior Skins Game
Jan. 27-30, ABC

Neil Bustamante, better known as "Buster", is a native of Oahu who came to Mauni Lani in 1980 after serving as vice president and general manager of Olomana Golf Links for 13 years. This will be Bustamante's fifth Skins Game, staged on a composite 18 at the 36-hole Mauni Lani Resort. Both designs were laid out by the firm of Nelson, Wright, Haworth — the first in 1980, the second 10 years later.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: "Our golf course is built on a lava floor," Bustamante explained, "so we run green grass right up to the edge of the lava. We actually burn the grass along the edge of the golf course with propane burners. It creates a sooted look, which makes it appear as if the lava flowed right up to the edge of the fairways. "A lot of golf course superintendents can't do this sort of thing because they're afraid of starting a fire. But that's not a problem out here on the lava."

MADE-FOR-TV PREPARATIONS: Bustamante explained that he irrigates with brackish water, which results in salty soil. The water is turned off a week before the tournament in order to firm up the course and accommodate electronic TV equipment.

With the water off, the grass goes brown pretty fast.

"It's a nightmare," said Bustamante, who resorts to grass paints. "And the TV equipment tears the course up sometimes. TV crews are not the superintendent's best friend."

Unlike many supers, Bustamante doesn't burn stripes into his fairways. "The Tour says 'Don't do it,' so I don't," he said. "But most guys do it anyway."

HARRY BRITT

The Links at Key Biscayne
Key Biscayne, Fla
Royal Caribbean Classic
Feb. 3-6, ESPN

Harry Britt waited a long time to host his first professional tour event. After attending turf programs at the University of Florida and Dade South Community College, the 62-year-old Britt spent many years working for the Dade County Parks and Recreation Department. Fifteen years ago, he accepted the head superintendent's position at Key Biscayne. Five years ago, the Senior Tour came calling. Britt was understandably nervous before the inaugural event, but now the butterflies are under control. Right? "Until about a week before the tournament," he said with a laugh. "They come automatically. You start worrying about what you forgot."

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: The Links at Key Biscayne, a von Hagge/Devlin design opened in 1972, has undergone a lot of new construction. Mounding has been installed around many greens. "They could be used for spectators," said Britt.

"But they weren't intended for them entirely." They also help frame the hole, he said.

Many of the fairways also feature new mounding. No need to hire shapers, though. "I did it myself," Britt explained. "I've rebuilt greens and traps. I really enjoy it."

MADE-FOR-TV PREPARATIONS: There aren't many to be found around Britt's course, save a few annuals around the clubhouse.

"What we try to do is keep the course in A-number-one condition all the time, so we don't have to prepare that much. We don't do any special striping. If a course is well groomed, it'll show on TV.

"If it's poorly groomed, that will show up, too."

JEFF GORHAM

Spyglass Hill Golf Links
Pebble Beach, Calif.
AT&T Pebble Beach Nat'l Pro-Am
Feb. 3-6, USA/CBS

Jeff Gorham, 31, was raised in the Fresno area and matriculated to Cal-Poly San Luis Obispo, where he earned a degree in ornamental horticulture in 1989. After serving as assistant superintendent at Incline Village in Lake Tahoe, he accepted the assistant's position at Spyglass. Six months later he was head superintendent, preparing his course for some of golf's best players and most glittering celebrities. This year's AT&T will be his second as head super, and he plans to be a bit more relaxed. "I hope so — as long as the weather cooperates," he says with a laugh. "We had a lot of trouble with the rains last year: twice what we normally receive... But this year the weather's been great."

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: "We keep the course, meaning the areas off the fairways, in more of a natural state," said Gorham of Spyglass, a Robert Trent Jones Sr. design completed in 1966. "This is an older course that's not intended to be manicured, I don't think. There isn't much rough, and what's there is meant to blend into the surrounding forest." Gorham has overseen the reclamation of 11 greens, which had shrunk in size over the years. "We restored them to their original designs," he explained. "We picked up two extra pin placements per hole, which really helps us during the winter time. Because it's so shaded here, and it can be so wet, it's tough to grow grass."

MADE-FOR-TV PREPARATIONS: Much of the AT&T action will be televised from Pebble Beach, with hand-held cameras venturing over to Spyglass. "But we want it to look impressive for the galleries and players," Gorham said. "We give the fairways a nice shot of iron so they green up and stripe really well. It's a little more low key than Pebble, which is really under the microscope."

Hayes certified as soil scientist

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Alan Hayes, education manager for technician training for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), has earned the title of Certified Professional Soil Scientist.

Hayes assists in management of programs for spray technicians and irrigation specialists.

The CPSS designation is achieved through the certification program administered by the American Registry of Certified Professionals in Agronomy, Crops and Soils.

Prior to joining GCSAA in 1992, Hayes was a crop diversification specialist in Guatemala for the U.S. Peace Corps.

He holds a bachelor's degree in earth and mineral science from Penn State University and a master's degree in soil and water science from the University of Arizona.

Royal Golf & Tennis shuffles, adds staff

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — Royal Golf & Tennis, Ltd. has promoted and added four staff members of the maintenance departments of the Shipyard and Port Royal golf clubs, according to COO Mike Tinkey.

James Norby has been promoted from course superintendent to the new position of director of golf maintenance at the 27-hole Shipyard Golf Club.

Jay Reister will report to Norby and serve as assistant director of golf maintenance at Shipyard.

Scott Mau has been named director of golf maintenance for the Robber's Row, Planter's Row and Barony courses.

Steve McKinley has been transferred to Port Royal from the Shipyard Golf Club, Port Royal's sister facility on Hilton Head Island.

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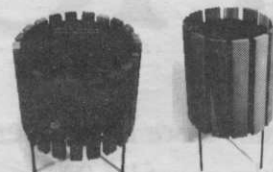
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