

# Gary 'Grow-in' Grigg: Nothing can prepare you for Florida

**N**APLES, Fla. — As Gary Grigg begins his 26th year in golf course construction and grow-in, he finds himself far from his father's old potato farms in Oregon and Idaho.

Grigg, who had planned to join the family business after completing his master's degree in agronomy at Michigan State University, found himself interested in turfgrass. He attached himself to a friend, golf course architect

Bruce Matthews, who was preparing to start a project called Lake Isabella in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

The project took four years to complete. Grigg has learned a lot since then about construction and grow-in.

"Bruce was the kind of architect who was willing to share information," Grigg said. "He had been a superintendent as well as designing about 100 courses. So, I started out in

course construction and grow-in. And now I look back over the last 26 years and realize that's all I've ever done — construction and grow-in."

As superintendent here at Naples National Golf Club, Grigg worked with designer Dr. Michael Hurdzan and builder Paul Clute, who finished the course in 10 months.

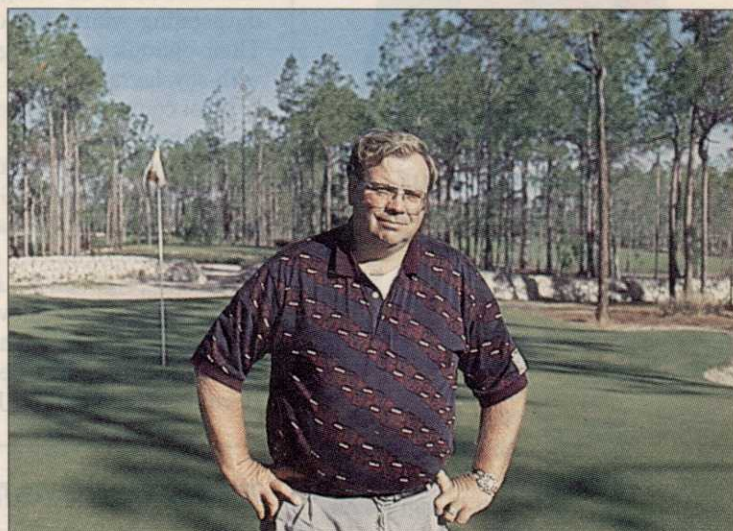
"We knew when we broke ground in January that we had to be ready for Oct. 19th," said Grigg, "and though we didn't know at that time that we'd also be hosting an LPGA tournament a few days later, that would not prove to be a problem... Dr. Benton, the club president, expected the course to be in tournament condition for our members and guests on opening day anyway."

What advice does Grigg offer other superintendents regarding growing-in?

"Get involved in the construction process!" he said. "The superintendent has a lot to add to that construction phase. Most importantly, he can serve as the owner's representative... Whether it is money, budget, time ... he'll be there to make the decisions that are going to affect maintenance and other things down the road."

That is what Grigg did at Naples. As soon as work began on one hole, the landscape crews were at work putting the finishing touches on the previous hole.

The grow-in process also had to be accelerated. Sprigging



Superintendent Gary Grigg at Naples National Golf Club.

was done at a very heavy rate to help the grass grow in faster. The greens were also planted at a heavy rate — with Tifdwarf Bermudagrass — and the tees around the bunkers were sodded. Heavy fertilizing efforts followed to escalate the effects of the warm, wet Florida growing season.

Grigg cautioned that no matter how good an agronomist or superintendent a person is, it is his ability to communicate, to deal with architects, builders, owners and investors that sets him apart.

That is just what Naples National's selection to host the World Championship of Women's Golf meant for Grigg. After he had completed the course, in order to satisfy the LPGA standards, he had to undo some of his work.

"The LPGA wanted the fairways cut at one-half inch and

the greens rolling 10 on a Stimp meter, which meant we had to get them down to one-eighth inch," Grigg said. "Here we were, accelerating grow-in and we've got a lot of grass on those greens. All of a sudden, we have to put the brakes on and start mowing the greens down. But, we found that mowing them down didn't necessarily make them any faster, so we had to go in with Verticut reels and actually start removing grass and thinning it out so we'd get less ball resistance."

That was in the middle of October, and led to an algae bloom which was cured in a month. The tournament was played.

None of Grigg's experience prepared him for Naples National. Not building Shadow Glen Golf Club in Olathe, Kan. Nor the Robert Trent Jones Course at the Lodge of the Four Seasons in Lake Ozark, Mo. Nor a 10-year stint with Kindred & Co., a Texas golf course development and management company where he was responsible for the construction and maintenance of all projects, including such notables as Ventana Canyon Golf and Racquet Club in Tucson, Ariz., and Barton Creek Country Club in Austin, Texas.

"Every project gives you new challenges," he said. "At Ventana Canyon, it was all decomposed granite and granite boulders right up against the alluvial of the Catalina Mountains. At Barton Creek, we were working with solid rock. And at Shadow Glen, we cut most of the course out of solid limestone.

"Nothing really prepares you for working in Florida. It's mainly wetlands, and there are a lot of environmental concerns here."

Grigg is a strong supporter of a four-year education, believing a two-year turf management certification program is not enough to supplement the technical knowledge with necessary business skills (speech, human re-

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# Atrazine tests on soil now can avoid mega-problems later

By TERRY BUCHEN

GALENA, Ohio — Superintendents routinely take nutrient soil tests of all topsoil that is stockpiled during construction — prior to grow-in of the new turf — to be better prepared for good agronomic practices.

One specialty soil test that is mandatory during the initial stages of golf course construction is the atrazine test — to see how much of this extremely residual herbicide is still present in the topsoil.

It is interesting to note that we had our topsoil checked at the Double Eagle Club, even though the property had not been farmed for eight years prior to course construction, and there was still atrazine detectable, though it was not enough to cause any problems in growing quality.

As a precaution, I would wholeheartedly recommend that atrazine tests routinely be taken on topsoil purchased from local sources, as many topsoil companies are purchasing topsoil from farms that are now being turned into housing developments.

Many of these former farms used atrazine right up to when they were sold and have extremely high amounts of atrazine, sometimes enough to prohibit new turf establishment.

The only sure way to eradicate atrazine from topsoil is to use methyl bromide, whose application is obviously time consuming, expensive and might not be available on the market too much longer.

After drilling test wells for our golf course a few years ago, we had irrigation-suitability tests taken and found we had an extremely high pH, high sodium levels, high sulfur (where the water smelled like rotten eggs), and an extremely high level of bicarbonates.

"Your irrigation well water source is best described as usable," stated Tom Burrows, turfgrass agronomist for Brookside Laboratories who is based in Stuart, Fla. "And you're going to have to chemically treat your water at some point in time, in the near future."

How right he was!

We had a drought during the grow-in process and used a large amount of well water to irrigate the new turf.

The more we irrigated, the more localized dry spots started to show up as the bicarbonates in the water were sealing up the top layer of the topsoil, thus not allowing water to penetrate.

Burrows recommended we install an irrigation system injector system which could treat

water with pHairway, a sulfuric acid derivative manufactured by Unocal 76.

Within a week of injecting the pHairway, we started seeing instant results as the localized dry spots started to disappear.

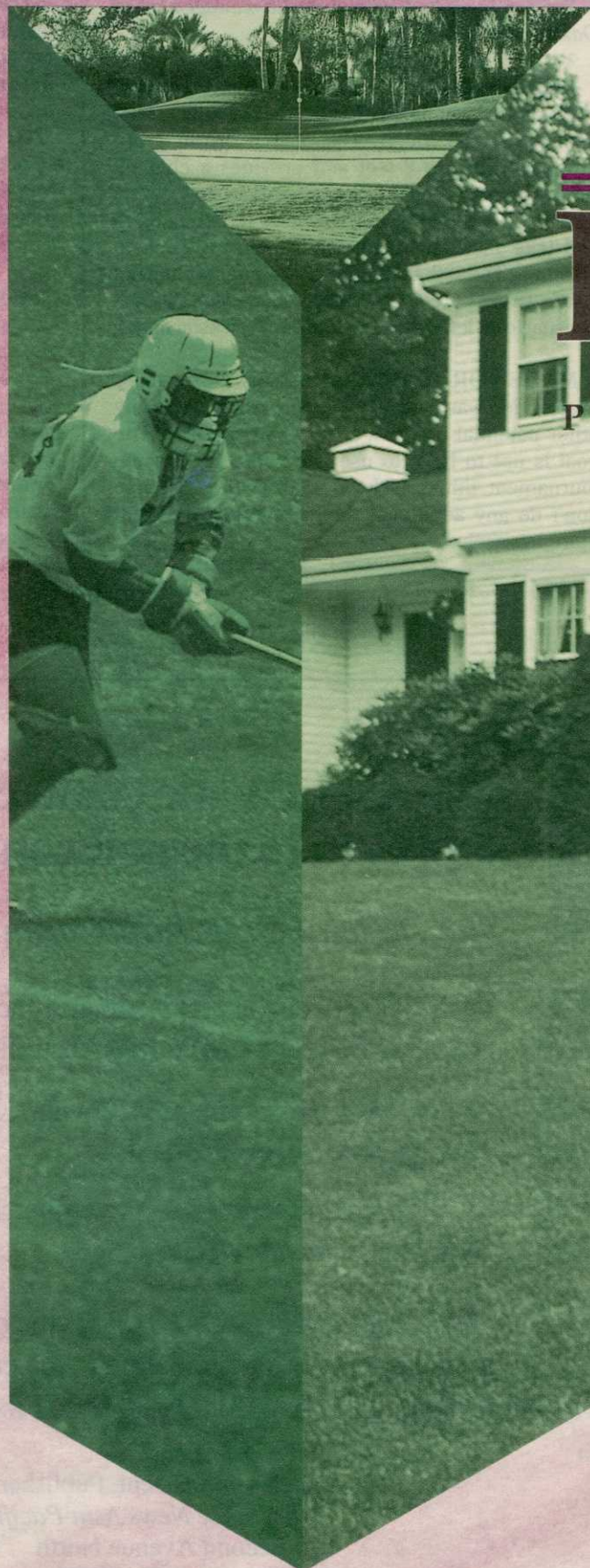
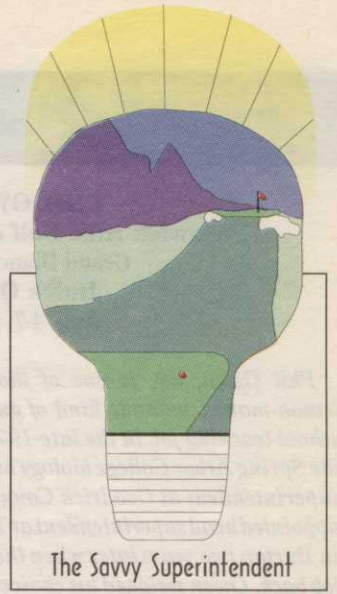
To further monitor our water treatment by injection, we started taking monthly water tests and had them analyzed by Brookside Labs.

The first monthly test was of our well water and the second

was from the treated irrigation water taken from the furthest point from our pumphouse.

Our injector system takes a constant reading of the water from our irrigation lake, then automatically calibrates how much pHairway is used, depending on what pH we tell it to treat the water to.

We usually keep the injector set at 6.5 pH and it does a great job of keeping our chemicals — in the water and out — in balance.



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## Grigg on grow-in

Continued from previous page sources, accounting, writing skills, word processing and computer literacy).

"My advice is to hone up the non-agronomy skills because that's what's going to make the difference between doing a good job of coordinating a construction/grow-in job, and just being there, but not contributing to the process," he said.



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