

On The Green



The 14th green shows the old root-zone material (left) that was removed by Tectonic, Inc. and grounds maintenance crews at Keystone Ranch golf course. The front of the green was left open for play during reconstruction. Note the heavy organic material in the soil profile, along with the deep-core aerification holes that were back-filled with sand.

Keystone stays open while redoing greens

By MARK LESLIE

Steve Corneillier, no stranger to innovation, has added another feather to the Keystone Ranch cap. The Keystone superintendent — who with Tectonic, Inc.'s Tom Bridle proved two years ago they could renovate bunkers during the winter in half the time of summer work — is renovating the Dillon, Colo. course's unhealthy greens

without stopping play, and without using temporary putting surfaces.

"In a resort environment you cannot afford to shut down," Corneillier said. "And, based on design of a hole, or a par-3, we thought temporary greens were not acceptable."

The solution?

Working on one hole at a time, Bridle's and Corneillier's crews

kept the front third of the greens open — top dressing, overseeding and getting 1,200 to 2,000 square feet into the best condition possible. "This way, golfers played to the intended greens," Corneillier said.

Meantime, on the back two-thirds or three-quarters of the green, they stripped the sod and removed the old root-zone mix down to the choker layer, which is 12 to 14 inches below the surface. Then they back-filled with a 90-10 (soil-to-sand) mix, keeping the original contours of the putting surfaces that Robert Trent Jones Jr. intended when he designed the famous course.

With the back of the greens renovated, Corneillier waited for the fall, when the course was closed, to replace the front portions. "Once we closed, we stripped sod off the front, dug out the old root zone, put in the new, and let it settle over the winter. We supplemented with additional root zone in the spring and then sodded between May 6 and 20," he said.

"Everybody said it couldn't be done," said Bridle, a maverick who enjoys innovation. "Well, we proved them wrong. No green was ever closed down."

The crews have completed half the course. They will not continue this summer because of other construction at the resort, Corneillier said. Instead, they will resume the work on Oct. 3, closing the back nine holes.

Saying he would recommend this method to any superintendent, Corneillier added: "The principal work is low-risk. If you have a green that is suffering and you have to completely rebuild it, you can make it work for golfers, the construction crew, superintendent and golf course owners. It's also an alternative to a temporary green, where you're never shooting to a true green. Here, you are still shooting to an original green — just a smaller portion — and it's certainly targeted golf."

An added plus, he said, was the interaction with resort guests. "People saw this operation, were very inquisitive, most didn't know how a green was built or what it was made of," he said. "It was very educational... We got great input."

Corneillier said despite prolonged and wide-ranging efforts to save the greens, their fate was sealed when nine feet of snow fell after March 15, 1993. "The grass basically rotted, even with our attempts to remove the snow with snow blowers," he said.

"We stayed with a 90-10 root-zone mix, thinking that would give us the best for what we needed in this environment," Corneillier said. "I think the original mix had too much organic [material] and was not properly blended. The

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

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GCSAA reordering

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"One of our mandates here was to get our house in order," said GCSAA Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Steve Mona. "And that's a large part of what we've done during my first five months here."

Indeed, Mona is a product of Andersen's impact. Since the study was issued, GCSAA has seen the departures of longtime Executive Director John Schilling, legal counsel Robert Ochs and Director of Membership Services Diana Green. Per Andersen's recommendations, GCSAA has created a completely restructured hierarchy, with Mona filling the newly created position of executive director and CEO (Schilling was merely the former).

The association also created the positions of chief operations officer — filled by Joe O'Brien — and chief financial officer, filled by Julian Arrendondo.

Since the Andersen study, GCSAA has suspended overseas publications; worked more closely with allied industry associations, particularly the United States Golf Association; and joined the chemical trade association RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) — something it refused to do under the Schilling regime.

Now GCSAA has created three new entities to deal with issues it feels haven't been fully addressed:

Chapter Relations: According to Mona, this department will interface with the association's 113 chapters nationwide. Unrest at the chapter level was particularly evident at the 1993 GCSAA Show in Anaheim, Calif., where all but one of the by-laws — drawn up in Lawrence — were killed by voting members.

Technical Information Services: "One of the things we've heard over the past few months is, we are the logical people to gather and disseminate technical information, and we don't do it," said Mona. "This is the information age, and creation of this department is a reaction to that."

Career Development: Mona noted GCSAA membership enjoys a very high percentage of employment. However, turf schools are turning out more and more qualified graduates each year — and the number of jobs is not keeping pace. In fact, the stock of private clubs is declining.

"We hear a lot about guys in the field for 20 or 30 years, making a nice living, at a good club for a long time," said Mona. "But what becomes attractive to the club is a young kid, with a good education, who draws half the salary. I hear a lot of those stories."

"I think you do two things: Give the older superintendent the opportunity to seek continued education if he wants; and give him the tools to better state his case to the club."

"Also, the association has to tell the story to their employers. In the great scheme of things, \$30,000 or \$40,000 in a multimillion-dollar budget is a drop in the bucket. We at GCSAA need to be able to tell that story."

Strengthening ties one of major aims of new regime

Arrendondo and O'Brien Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside

By PETER BLAIS

Strengthening ties with state and regional chapters, meeting with numerous committees, finding tenants for the association's excess office space, re-assigning staff and re-establishing ties with allied golf associations have been among the major chores undertaken by new Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Chief Operating Officer Joe O'Brien.

The GCSAA board of directors named O'Brien to the newly created post in January, about the same time it appointed Julian Arrendondo as chief financial officer. The two have formed a sort of Mr. Inside/Mr. Outside tandem to assist new Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Steve Mona.

"Julian oversees internal services like MIS (Management Information Systems), accounting and graphic services," O'Brien said. "I deal with those outside the headquarters building, like members, committees and other golf organizations."

O'Brien expected to have met with the 10 GCSAA committees he oversees by mid-June. He has also talked with many leaders of the association's 113 affiliate chapters and is laying the ground work for September's chapter relations meeting. Many claimed last fall's gathering was the key to passing January's controversial by-laws amendments, many of which were overwhelmingly defeated the year before.

"The chapters are the foundation for the national organization," O'Brien said. "They do excellent work, particularly in the areas of scholarship and research. We're looking at ways we can help them."

The national association recently hired a new real estate broker to market its excess office space. O'Brien said GCSAA staff only occupies five-eighths of the new, 40,000-square-foot office building. Less than half

of the old building, which GCSAA still owns, is rented, the COO added.

"The association could eventually need all the space. But that day is far off in the future," O'Brien said.

Following the annual meeting, O'Brien said the board directed GCSAA's 72-member staff to focus on three areas — its own internal staffing needs, rebuilding relations with other golf and green industry associations, and returning the organization's focus to meeting members' needs.

A few people have left, notably Government Relations Manager Kirk Kahler, Tournament Manager John White and Membership Director Janet Rose, O'Brien said. Several others have been reassigned.

"We found a lot of talented people inside these walls," O'Brien said.

The new upper management staff has reviewed recommendations in the Arthur Andersen management study conducted last year, the COO said. Those found valid have been instituted, including better coordinating computer hardware and software programs; seeking higher-yield investments for association funds; developing a new employee handbook; investigating flex-time scheduling; expanding the work week from 37-1/2 to 40 hours; and hiring a compensation consultant to analyze roles and salaries (see related story on page XX).

Two years ago, GCSAA withdrew its annual donation to the United States Golf Association's research efforts, straining relations between the two organizations.

"We'll be making a donation to the USGA this year," promised O'Brien, adding that GCSAA plans to build bridges and mend fences with other organizations as well.

Serving membership needs will be the goal of all GCSAA research and education, he added. The research committee (for-



Joe O'Brien

mally scholarship and research) is scheduled to meet in September to adopt an official agenda. In the meantime, O'Brien has informally surveyed research committee members and said he found several common interests.

First, he said, there is a desire to focus on health and human safety, especially in light of the University of Iowa study on increased cancer rates among superintendents. Second is an emphasis on doing research on golf courses rather than at university test plots or in laboratories.

Educationally, new programs are on the drawing board for maintenance specialists, especially mechanics.

"Head superintendents report having a difficult time finding qualified people for that position," O'Brien said.

In no way, O'Brien assured, is adding specialist training a forerunner to a third run at a bylaw amendment to increase membership classifications. That measure was resoundingly defeated at the last two annual meetings.

"The members spoke pretty clearly regarding increasing membership classes," O'Brien said. "It certainly wouldn't be prudent to bring it up again without a lot of research."

Prior to coming to GCSAA, O'Brien spent 18 years in a variety of administrative positions with the Professional Golfers Association. During that time he witnessed the growth in stature of the club professional. A similar professional image is what many superintendents hope to attain.

"At almost every meeting I've attended, image enhancement has come up," O'Brien noted. "Members want help from national headquarters in building up their image. They have invested a lot of time and money in education and are employed in a high-risk occupation. They want more visibility with the public. And they want the people they report to to recognize the validity of their advice as educated course managers."

Irishman apprentices in America

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ment, he said, adding this is an area in which Ireland needs to improve. O'Fee has come to value machinery while working under Lasher.

"He is basically looking to learn as much as he can from American golf course maintenance," said Lasher. "Europeans do things differently than we do, and it's interesting to learn about their turf management practices and the way they approach agronomics."

While studying in his homeland, O'Fee learned little about pesticide spraying. He is studying it here and preparing for the Oregon pesticide application exam. He believes these are the experiences that will provide him the technical skill he seeks.

O'Fee has also noticed changes in the use of fertilizers and pesticides, both here and at home.

"Ignorance is no longer going to be all right," said O'Fee. "In the European market we're becoming a lot more environmentally aware... There is a lot of restriction."

O'Fee has noticed the German influence on the conscience of Europe.

"The restrictions are really tight in Germany. They've really cracked down

[on the use of chemicals]. The German influence has really spread to the United Kingdom. That is a trend that is going to manifest itself, some golf courses now are trying to go completely organic."

America, by O'Fee's observation, is changing in response to a different pressure — that of the media and the courts. The result is inconsistent policy from state to state. In this regard he believes European countries — smaller and more easily regulated — have an advantage.

He also noticed cultural differences in the attitudes of American golfers.

"Although golf is a popular sport here, the golf courses are used much more seasonally," said O'Fee. "When it rains here, people are not as likely to face the elements."

In Ireland golf is a year-round sport. Despite cold weather, the courses do not close down and most people still play, he said.

O'Fee would like to continue working in the United States, even when he finishes his apprenticeship at The Resort in October. His original intent was to return home, but he said he has a lot more to learn. So he may be here for a while...

Legislature gives Clemson a boost

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operating money," he said, "and I assume we will develop an internal competitive grants program as one component of the funds."

"We've also got a real need to increase the quality of the turfgrass research facilities. And we will be hiring key faculty members, though I'm not sure what those positions will be."

University officials hope to have a plan in place by early July.

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Meanwhile, Clemson is in the midst of constructing an 18-hole handicapped-accessible golf course designed to be a "working laboratory" for researchers and students.

Keystone beats challenge

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new SR 1020 bentgrass was grown in a 90-10 mix as well. We buy all our sand, top dressing or root zone and bentgrass sod through Tectonic. We want to keep everything consistent, from root zone to what the sod was grown in, to the top dressing we're using."