

# High school turf program fills the needs of students, courses

By PETER BLAIS

STUART, Fla. — Giving high school students a taste of what it's like to be a golf course superintendent is the goal behind The Bulldog Sports Turf Complex at South Fork High School.

Completed in late 1990, the 20-acre facility includes three par-3 golf holes, putting green and practice range. Approximately 75 students use the complex for educational purposes. Another 60 spread among the golf team,

physical education classes and adult education program practice and play on the three-hole layout.

But turf education is the primary focus.

"A local superintendent who went to Ohio State University told me he saw a lot of kids enter the OSU turf program who had never worked on a golf course," said South Fork turfgrass instructor Keith Krueger.

"They had no idea what they were getting into and were simply

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— Keith Krueger  
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overwhelmed. This facility exposes students to the possibility of a golf management career and weeds out those who might never make it."

Krueger credits Vocational School Director Carl Miller with hatching the idea. Miller saw a need to train students to work on the 26 golf courses in surrounding Martin County.

Miller recruited Krueger from Mirimar High School, where he was a horticulture teacher and

oversaw construction of the school's football field.

The educators created an advisory committee that included local architect Charles Ankrom and superintendents Kevin Downing of Willoughby Golf Club and Harry Lincoln of Boca Grove Country Club.

"I didn't know anything about building a golf course, but they walked me through it," Krueger said.

Ankrom donated his expertise to design the facility. Construction started in late 1989 with many local companies providing labor, equipment and supplies at cost or below.

"It cost the school about \$80,000 to build a facility worth about \$350,000," Krueger said. "The only area we've come up short is maintenance equipment. Some of the courses have been very good about giving us their used stuff. But it's generally pretty used up and in need of repair. We were hoping to get some of the major suppliers to donate more."

Several students have used the experience gained on the South Fork facility to obtain full-time positions on course maintenance crews.

Many more are working weekends and summers. A few are preparing for superintendent careers.

"We just had a student who went on to the turf program at Abraham Baldwin College in Georgia come back to do an internship at a nearby course," Krueger said.

Students receive a certificate for participating in the high school turf program. The local branch of Indian River Community College also offers college credit for completing the turf course and passing a college-administered competency test.

Students entering related fields, like landscape maintenance or nursery work, also benefit from time spent on the school course.

"And even if they don't eventually go to work in the turf or plant industry, they earn a lifelong respect for the environment," Krueger said.

The Bulldog complex also helped South Fork's Agriculture Department, which includes the turf program, become one of just 15 schools invited into the state Academics for Career Development and Applied Technology Program.

Teachers in the program — including math, science, English and social studies instructors — gear their curriculum to different aspects of agriculture.

"The teachers meet frequently and coordinate their courses around a certain topic," Krueger said. "It might be plants for nine weeks, then water for the next nine. It lets students see there are connections between what they learn in those subjects and what they want to do in life."

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