

And the leader in the clubhouse is Iron Man Gray

Dedication of Franklin Hills superintendent is two-fold, extraordinary

By TERRY BUCHEN

FRANKLIN, Mich. — He handles a heavy work schedule as superintendent at Franklin Hills Golf Club here, serves on the Green Section Committee of the U.S. Golf Association, the board of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation and the Green Committee for the Golf Association of Michigan (GAM), and is co-chairman of the Michigan Turfgrass Conference. Yet Tom Gray has earned the moniker "The Iron Man" among course superintendents, not for these duties, but because he has played more than 100 rounds of golf every year the past 15 years.

A member of *Golf Digest's* national ranking panel the past seven years, Gray's 138 rounds in 1994 were the most of any golfer with GAM.

By mid-June the 1.9 handicapper had played 51 rounds of golf this year. Some would say that is amazing for a person who lives in the Midwest. Gray merely shrugs and goes about his business, much like other Caro, Mich., natives, numbering about 50 people in the golf construction and turf industry.

Among his Caro compatriots are 21 people past and present who have worked for Wadsworth Golf Construction Co., course builder Paul Clute, course architect Tom Fazio



The 2nd hole at Tom Gray's Franklin Hills Golf Club.

and a half dozen superintendents.

While Gray comes from a community rich in golf tradition, he lays his accolades at the feet of Ted Woehrle, who as superintendent at Oakland Hills Country Club hired Gray in 1980. Gray was just two years out of Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in crop and soil sciences.

Working as superintendent at the 27-hole Grand Blanc Golf Club while it was going through receivership, Gray was superintendent, mechanic and spraying technician all in one — surely setting the stage for his future Iron Man status.

"I spent nine years learning the trade from Ted and

sometimes I think that I should have stayed a couple of years longer and learned a little more," Gray said.

"He is tough, smart, fair and patient. One of the most important things Ted gave me was the history of the turf industry. His father was in the turf industry, and I was able to learn from 50-plus years of experience."

At Oakland Hills, Gray was assistant primarily on the North Course, which served as a parking lot of the 1981 U.S. Senior Open and 1985 U.S. Open.

"It was an interesting experience trying to maintain a golf course while trying to prevent the least amount of damage from 50,000 cars that were parked throughout the

tournament weeks," Gray said. "The two USGA events were a lot of fun and a lot of work, but it is a grand experience. I think everyone who is into agronomy should go through the U.S. Open."

In 1988 Gray was hired at Franklin Hills, a private club that plays fewer than 20,000 rounds per year. Designed by Donald Ross and built in 1927, the course features long par-3s and par-4s and short par-5s.

Taking the lead of his mentor, Woehrle, Gray has tutored many on his 18-hole track. He has overseen eight assistants and 10 turfgrass students. He gives high marks to current assistants Tom Lawrence, Brett Berry, Darrick Robbins and Jim Johnson, as well as "great mechanics and a



very supportive crew that has made me look pretty good over the past seven years."

The Franklin Hills membership has been very supportive, "which makes it a fun place to work," he added. "The manager, Michael Haberlein, the golf pro, Bill Baldwin, and the superintendent all work together. It's kind of incredible."

Last year, Gray's grounds crew proved its dedication elsewhere. They helped with the turf at the Pontiac Silverdome during the World Cup soccer matches. They worked eight hours at the golf course, then labored at the Silverdome until 11:30 p.m. every day.

"Dr. [John] 'Trey' Rogers was a taskmaster in trying to make the field look perfect," Gray said. "The crew crawled on their hands and knees picking up every little piece of grass that wasn't attached [to the sod]. All of the World Cup games were sold out, so there were only a few tickets for the crew. Most of our crew donated their time."

The Iron Man credited two other superintendents besides Woehrle for giving him "enough experience in turf to survive" — Ron Foote at Forest Akers Golf Club and Ron Brandon when he was at Warwick Hills in Grand Blanc.

Maine Hall inducts Ruby

SOUTH PORTLAND Maine — The late Ernest E. (Pete) Ruby Jr., who logged 53 years of service at Portland Country Club in Falmouth Foreside, will be inducted into the Maine Golf Hall of Fame on Aug. 18 at Sables Oaks Golf Club here.

Ruby, who died in 1986, began at PCC as a laborer in 1921. He was superintendent from 1941 to 1969, and stayed three more seasons as consultant as son Lloyd ascended to the top post.

Longtime PCC pro Hap Malia recalls Ruby as a mechanical genius who saved the club untold thousands of dollars. "Before there was any aerator around to give greens breathing opportunity, Pete made his own by welding teeth from a rake onto a roller. He could grow grass anywhere," he said.

Hailing Ruby's career as unique in the country in 1971, then-Golf Course Superintendents Association of America President Richard Blake noted, "I've never heard of another man staying with a course that long and doing such a great job. I doubt there will be his equal in the future."



Pete Ruby

AquaGro®
DILUTE 'n SHOOT™
HOSE-END PROPORTIONER™

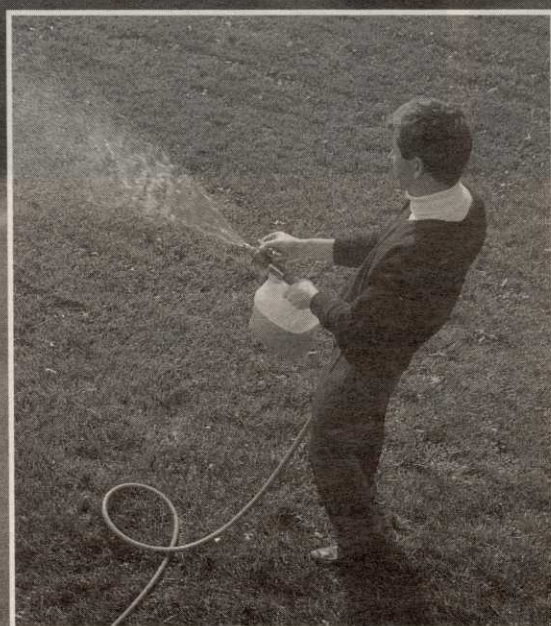
The No Water-In Alternative For Applying AquaGro®•L Safely, Accurately And Conveniently.

Now you can apply AquaGro®•L concentrate to problem areas at maximum strength without a spray rig and without watering it in. Simply attach Dilute 'n Shoot™ to the end of a hose and get the penetrating power of AquaGro•L, the most widely used soil wetting agent, whenever and wherever you need it.

Safe & Accurate

The heart of the Dilute 'n Shoot is its precision tooled Venturi siphon, which accurately meters AquaGro•L and mixes it with the proper amount of water to ensure turf safety — even during the most stressful weather. The Dilute 'n Shoot, supplied with a 5 quart reuseable bottle, allows you to cover up to 20,000 sq. ft. at a rate of 8 ounces per 1000 sq. ft., without refilling.

Dilute 'n Shoot and 5 quart AquaGro•L refills are available from your Aquatrols Turf Products Distributor. Call for a FREE product information sheet.



AQUATROLS
Making Water Work Efficiently

5 North Olney Ave., Cherry Hill, NJ USA 08003
800-257-7797 from anywhere in the U.S. and Canada
609-751-0309 • Fax: 609-751-3859