

TPC's Miller hits tournament grand slam in 1996-97

By CHRIS SMITH

For an indication of how established, and accomplished, Collier Miller has become within the Tournament Players Club Network (TPC), look at his track record. It's what might be described as a superintendent's grand slam in professional golf-course preparation — four Tour events within a calendar year.

It began last October with the PGA Tour's Las Vegas Invitational at his home facility, the TPC at Summerlin.

Miller, CGCS, then assisted the new superintendent, Paul Ellwood, in preparing the TPC of Scottsdale for the Phoenix Open in January.

Upcoming in April is the Senior PGA Tour's Las Vegas Senior Classic, which has moved from the TPC at Summerlin to the nearby TPC at the Canyons, where Miller has been serving in an advisory capacity to resident super Kim Wood.

Then it's back to the Las Vegas Invitational in October.

"Once you've been through it a few times, you tend to relax and enjoy it more," said the 37-year-old Miller, who generally puts in between 90 and 100 hours during tournament time. "It's actually fun. You always worry about problems here and there, but it always seems to turn out well for us."

It doesn't hurt to have a fine-tuned system like the TPC Network. After all, tournament golf is a standard function of the TPC Network, which is comprised of clubs that are owned and/or operated by PGA Tour Golf Course Properties, Inc.

"The system makes it a lot easier for the transition from member-and-guest play to tournament play," Miller said. "I



know I was real nervous for my first tournament. But after the second and third, I relaxed. So many things are automatic. We keep a tournament bible of records for every tournament, from work schedule and fertilization to maintenance and location of everything. Everything is spelled out. So the next tournament, we repeat a lot of it.

"Plus, we essentially keep Tournament Players Clubs in tournament condition throughout most of the year, other than aerification."

But a system doesn't work without the personnel to carry it through. Under Miller's guidance, the TPC of Summerlin was named Maintenance Operation of the Year within the TPC Network for 1994.

When the native of Camarillo, Calif., isn't working, he divides time trying to play to a seven handicap and doing outdoor activities with his family. But free time is a precious commodity, particularly with four tournaments on his schedule.



Collier Miller at TPC at Summerlin.

studying landscape design. "But then I started playing some golf with a few friends. Just

looking at the courses we played, I thought of them as one big landscape and thought it would be a lot of fun to work on a golf course. So I switched career paths," Miller recalled.

After graduating in 1983 with a degree in horticulture with an emphasis on turfgrass, Miller was immediately hired by the Sunrise Co. in Palm Springs, Calif., as an assistant superintendent. At the time, Sunrise was involved in a half-dozen developments in the Palm Springs area.

Nine months later, the superintendent left. Miller served in an interim capacity over the next three months before being elevated to full-time superintendent.

Miller remained with Sunrise for 11 years, working at three different clubs. He was working at Indian Ridge when he learned of an opening at the TPC of Scottsdale. He contacted Cal Roth, national director of golf course maintenance operations for PGA Tour Golf Course Properties, who in turn scheduled an interview.

Within a couple of months, however, the superintendent at the TPC at Summerlin relocated to Scottsdale, so Miller was hired to fill the opening in Las Vegas.

The past three years have been beneficial to both parties.

"Collier has done a great job," Roth said. "The golf course conditions improve every year on the six-year-old course under his supervision. With Collier's assistance at the TPC of the Canyons and the TPC of Scottsdale, he has become a very valuable part of our network."



Chris Smith is director of special projects for PGA Tour Properties

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