

BY JOHN WALSH

## The little things count, too

An accessory upgrade is part of an overall course improvement project in Nebraska

Prairie Hills Golf Course in Pleasanton, Neb., had seen better days. The condition of the course has declined during the past few years, but Nick Erdman, co-superintendent at the public 18-hole course, and his family are changing that. They're improving the course in many ways, including upgrading accessories.

The course hadn't been run correctly, Erdman says, adding it had several owners during the past five years. Erdman and his in-laws, who live in the area, bought the course in June 2007 from the previous individual owner, who also managed the course.

"The course was in pretty bad shape," he says. "We're putting a lot of money into it. Although new sprinkler heads were installed by the previous owner, we put money into every aspect – equipment, fertilizer, irrigation, cups and the two-level, 5,000-square-foot clubhouse. We spent \$5,000 on accessories, including flagsticks, tee markers, fairway markers and cup cutters."

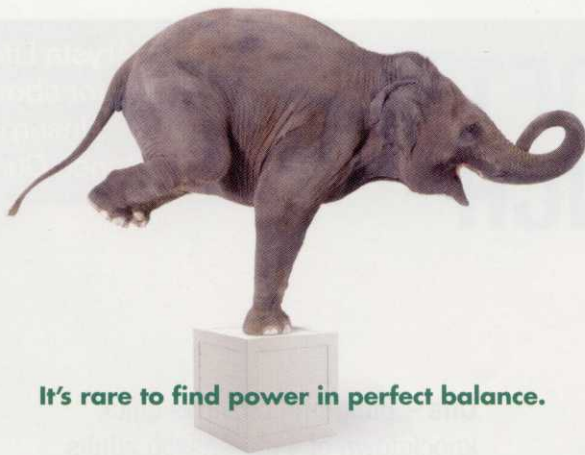
All of the new accessories were purchased at the same time last year.

Going forward, Erdman budgeted \$2,500 a year for accessories.



Nick Erdman spent \$5,000 on accessories as part of an overall improvement project at Prairie Hills Golf Course. Photos: Nick Erdman





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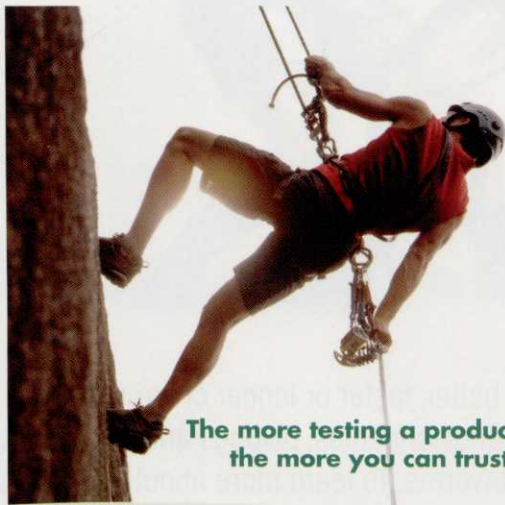
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## ACCESSORIES

This spring, he's looking to purchase and install granite hole markers as part of the course improvement.

Erdman and family chose to purchase their golf course accessories from Standard Golf, after they compared prices and products in several catalogs from different companies that offer accessories.

"We're happy with the products," he says. "We spent a little more, but we know they'll last."

Erdman likes Standard Golf's local service, too. He works with the distributor Van Wall Turf & Irrigation in Omaha.

Accessories are important to Erdman because he wants Prairie Hills to look nice. He wants to provide a quality product for golfers through his high standards. For example, customers can tell the quality of a flagstick when they pull it out of the hole, he says.

Erdman plans to upgrade other accessories as part of the overall improvement of the course. He intends to purchase new ball washers in the next year or two and improve the water stations by building a platform on which the water container can sit. Erdman also plans to



At Prairie Hills Golf Course, Nick Erdman plans to upgrade the ball washers and water stations, as well as purchase more directional signs, hazard markers and out-of-bounds markers. Photos: Nick Erdman





buy a few more directional signs, hazard markers and out-of-bounds markers. There are some markers on the course, but he wants to upgrade them and purchase more.

Prairie Hills' customers comment on the quality of the accessories and link that to the overall improvement of the course. Word of mouth about the course improvement is spreading, Erdman says.

Currently, there are 75 members of the public course, a significant decline from the 400 who were members 10 year ago. Erdman's goal is to increase membership to between 250 and 300 people.

"We should attain that pretty easily in two years," he says.

Right now, Erdman and staff are planning for the 2008 season. They'll make purchases in late February and early March for all aspects of the course.

"We want everything in place before we head outside for the season," he says.

Erdman's father-in-law and mother-in-law, who had never lived in Pleasanton, moved there from Wyoming to help manage the course. Erdman and his family have no previous golf course maintenance experience, however, he says they all golf and grew up on a farm. Farming has similarities to golf course maintenance, he says. Erdman and his family rely on one of the course's young maintenance workers whose grandfather built the golf course in the early 1980s.

"We lean on him at times," Erdman says. "We also look at other golf courses. We know what looks nice."

It will take another year to get where Erdman and his family want the course to be conditionwise.

"It will never be perfect," he says.

Last year the course generated 6,000 rounds from June through December. The goal is to get to 15,000 rounds annually.

"We're trying to be realistic," Erdman says. **GCI**



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