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PLANNING A SMOOTH OPERATION

Q When televising a major golf championship, what are the concerns facing a golf course superintendent when interacting with the needs of the electronic media and requirements of the golf course operation?

A Major events are televised by networks that give significant revenues back to the sponsoring organization. Throughout the years, I've learned the televising network can't be successful without cooperation from the golf course superintendent and his staff.

The network compound location is important because it's where it all begins. Space requirements vary from 50,000 to 125,000 square feet, including space for trucks and their trailers, office trailers, golf carts, parking for hundreds of workers, food-and-beverage tents, restroom facilities,

and entrance/exit availability.

The ground selected should be firm and kept dry to handle heavy equipment and production trucks. This area usually requires a surface of crushed rock or concrete for parking in case rain makes the location swampy.

Communication requirements for the broadcast network should be established and cabling needs should be defined.

Potable water will be required for the catering operation. If water isn't available, chlorinated water tanks might be brought in. In extreme cases, wells might need to be sunk into the location.

Access to the site is vital. The site must be able to accommodate 250-plus vehicles and shuttles into and out of the compound.

Space for large generators is necessary in case of a power outage. Space needs to be allocated to support servicing needs.

Space should be available for vendors who set up all the towers throughout the golf course and their equipment.

If network affiliates are involved in cooperation with the major broadcasting team, space must be made for their needs, too. This can lead to the use of an inactive fairway in close proximity to the compound.

Finally, the space, equipment, personnel and materials must be secured and surrounded by a chain-link fence.

Q During the 1997 U.S. Open Championship at Congressional Country Club, golf course superintendent Paul R. Latshaw, in agreement with the USGA, chose to use walking mowers throughout the golf course. What were the needs of the maintenance area to accommodate this excessive amount of mowers?

If hosting a televised tournament, space needs to be allocated for such things as scaffolding for the broadcast team.
Photo: John Walsh

A First, Latshaw must be commended for his effort coordinating this huge undertaking. While not recommended for daily play, the planning and execution were incredible. Latshaw's planning for the mechanical end of this program included accommodating space needs of mechanics and technicians to work comfortably without interfering with each other and allocating proper space to park and stage 150 walking mowers. An area for the mechanic staff to rest when not minding the mower fleet also was factored into the master plan.

Latshaw addressed the need for enough grinding units to quickly turn around any mower that needed attention and technicians who specialized in the grinding operation. The ability to move a large number of mower reels around without damaging the reel or hurting a staff member was paramount. It was essential to have enough electrical power from the correct source to accomplish any sharpening task.

There was a need for space to store extra equipment in case units on the golf course broke down. Additionally, the ability to transport replacement equipment onto the golf course was considered.

Latshaw also needed to preorder a sufficient supply of lapping compound.

The ease of fueling each mower, as well as the remainder of the equipment fleet, was factored into the operations equation.

Other considerations: What did the wash-off area consist of? Will water be used, or will it be a "blow off" area? Can more than one mower be washed at one time? Where does the rinsed product go without impacting the flow of the maintenance area and flooding a traffic alley? Can all this equipment leave and be transported onto the golf course in a seamless fashion?

As you can see, this activity – although invisible to golf fans – required time, effort and complete planning of every detail to be effective and functional. **GCI**

Editor's note: If you have any questions about course set-up or maintenance related to golf tournaments or events, e-mail Tim Moraghan at tmoraghan11@comcast.net.

