

and in order to meet Audubon's environmental goals, we decide it should go to 1.5 X, I can use this in my favor when I negotiate the budget with the club," he says. "I remind them we're a sensitive property and there's technology that's better, but it will cost more money. In this case, Audubon is our support group.

"Plant health is so incredibly important to the success of our jobs and to protect the environment," Miller adds. "If we don't have to spray, we won't. If the plant is healthier, it will require fewer chemicals. If we can apply at a reduced rate, everyone wins."

Miller has soil and plant tissue tests conducted regularly, and he monitors the condition of the turf constantly. His biggest environmental challenge is soluble fertilizer use.

"Environmental activists believe it will relocate into low areas," he says. "We use foliar fertilizer and spoon-feed. We try to put down only what the plant will pick up. Our property is prone to flooding, and if I were to put down any type of organic or granular product at a time when I anticipate a flood, those nitrates and phosphates would go right into the Sudbury River. I make sure I use products that won't relocate, and that's in line with the Audubon approach to fertility levels."

The club has partnered with Grigg Bros. Foliar Fertilizers and its technical representative, Gordon Kauffman, Ph.D., to develop the fertility program.

"Paul makes sure his fertility program takes an integrated approach to protect the environment," Kauffman says. "Our highly efficient foliar fertilizers maximize the use of nutrients. This method gets fertilizer into the plant more efficiently. Soil and tissue tests are used as guidelines. Paul then looks at how the plants are responding to fine-tune the program further. The goal is to stimulate plant health, which will reduce pesticide applications."

ART AND SCIENCE

Miller admits to stretching the limits of the integrated pest management approach.

"We have to be able to anticipate disease and infection," he says. "This is where the art of our profession takes over from the science, and this takes experience and ability. We have to be able to see symptoms before there's injury to the plant. Some systemic fungicides have preventive and curative rates. The curative rate can be two,

three and four times the preventive rate. The IPM approach is to scout, look for the pressure and apply. However, if there's a tournament or rain event that prevents application the next day, that first incidence of pressure could be three days from the time you can spray and make a difference in three times the rate of application.

"Let's say the humidity is 70 percent, nighttime temperatures are 80 degrees, and we're in a dicey situation looking at thunderstorms," he adds. "When the combined number is 150,

we can expect some issues. We want to spray preventively and use less chemical. So, do we synergistically tank mix two products at low rates to get the strength from both chemicals, or do we wait a little longer and find out we have to go into the curative rate three days later? Is that anticipation outside the IPM approach? That's the art and science." **GCI**

David Wolff is a freelance writer based in Watertown, Wis. He can be reached at dgwolff@charter.net.

TOURNAMENT TESTED

Paul Miller, CGCS, is in his 20th year at Nashawtuc Country Club in Concord, Mass., and has hosted his 20th PGA Tour event, the Champions Tour Bank of America Championship.

"It's exciting to be able to push a golf course to its limits knowing how far you can go and peaking for a major event," Miller says. "That gets the juices going, and it still does after 20 years. Some tour officials told me I've hosted more PGA Tour events than anyone else in the country."

Course conditions have changed throughout the years, primarily because new players on the Champions Tour are coming off the regular PGA Tour.

"The players on the old senior tour were appreciative of quality conditions," Miller says. "The new players expect them. As a result, there's a lot of pressure on tour officials. The agronomists are sensitive to irrigation. They prefer no irrigation on fairways for the entire week of the event. They want firmness and consistency. But we spend more time on bunkers than any other area."

The height of cut for the tournament isn't different than when there's member play, with the exception of the rough, which is higher during the tournament. To achieve tournament conditions, the frequency of cut on the fairways is increased.

"We double cut fairways for the event," Miller says. "I also take advantage of high rates of growth regulators, and combined with increased frequency of cut there are few clippings. The fairways are extremely tight and dry. This, plus new golf club equipment technology gives players their distance."

The club's members take pride in hosting the event. As new members come in, almost all are supporters of the tournament despite any disruptions.

"It's a televised event, and they like to show off the club to their friends," Miller says. "But most importantly, our members are excited about the money that goes to charity. This year the tournament raised more than \$400,000." **GCI**



IT'S THE CONDITIONS, STUPID!

At Rocky Gap Lodge & Golf Resort, Mark Jewell is fixing agronomic problems by returning to basic cultural practices.
Photo: Rocky Gap & Golf Resort

By John Walsh

ENHANCING COURSE CONDITIONS CAN IMPROVE A FACILITY'S POSITION IN THE MARKETPLACE

To stay a leg up on competition in markets throughout the country, most facilities are focusing on three things: course conditions, service and amenities. Many, if not all, agree the success of a golf facility depends on the playing conditions of the course. And many are spending money to improve those conditions to bolster or hold their position in the marketplace.

WHERE IT SHOULD BE

Rocky Gap Lodge & Golf Resort in Cumberland, Md., features an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus signature design, driving range and practice facility. It opened in 2000, but despite its age, the course wasn't in good shape a year ago and needed improvement.

"There was a severe lack of fertility on the tees, fairways and rough," says Mark Jewell, director of golf maintenance operations since September 2006. "There was a lot of disease pressure and dollar spot. Preemergent weed control hadn't been done in two years. There was a lot of crabgrass, clover and thistle. There were propertywide problems with weeds. A lot of cultural practices weren't being done."

Jewell, who helped with the grow-in of the course as an assistant, says he was hired specifically to improve course conditions.

"Fixing the problem is all about getting back to basic cultural practices, such as large aerification (five-eighths cores), along with preemergent and postemergent herbicide programs," he says. "We started a new program when I arrived Sept. 18. The first thing we did was aerify. My assistant has been here eight years, and he said it was the first time in eight years the greens were aerified twice in one year."

Currently, Jewell is focused on controlling thatch.

The staff had a lot of time to work on the newly implemented turfgrass management program after aerification was done last year because of the warm winter, Jewell says. The staff, including an assistant, irrigation tech and full-time mechanic, consists of 16 workers. Jewell kept the existing staff and added a spray technician and two equipment operators when he arrived.

"I'm a 'keep it simple, stupid' type manager," he says. "It's a team effort. I want the crew to buy into the program. I teach them about the program because the more knowledge they have, the better they'll be."

Jewell has had help financially, too. Since his arrival, the maintenance budget increased \$200,000.

"When I came on board, Billy Casper Golf

recommended that increase to turn the golf course around," he says.

BCG is under contract with Crestline Hotels & Resorts for five years to perform agronomic maintenance on the golf course. Crestline manages the property, and the Maryland Environmental Development Association owns the property.

Rounds and revenue at Rocky Gap have declined for several years, Jewell says, admitting he doesn't have exact numbers. But he started to see things coming around last fall. Last December, thanks to a warm winter, the course generated 785 rounds versus a budget of 50.

Jewell says feedback from golfers and golf writers from the Baltimore and Pittsburgh areas has been positive. And last fall, the resort added sales representatives in Northern Virginia and Pittsburgh.



The \$2-million renovation of Cottonwood Valley Golf Course made the product acceptable again, says superintendent Rusty Wilson.



The golf courses at the Shawnee Inn and Golf Resort were reconfigured to attract beginner golfers. Photo: Shawnee Inn and Golf Resort

"We're marketing aggressively, drawing on the tri-state area in key markets," he says. "We'd like to be around 20,000 rounds Dec. 31. We're open every day of the year weather permitting.



Jewell

"We're out to provide the best product we can," Jewell adds. "Customer service in our No. 1 goal. We're making sure we're sound, culturally, and have a well-trained staff. We're getting the word out that we're back in the shape that a Jack Nicklaus course should be."

REFOCUS

Bill Troyanoski, general manager of Saddle Creek Resort in Copperopolis, Calif., which features one 18-hole golf course that's 11 years old, is in a position like Jewell's. Troyanoski, who has been there two years, was hired to improve golf course conditions, which weren't flattering, he says.

"No one understood the status of the golf course," Troyanoski says. "We are a real-estate driven entity. When I arrived, we were going through two and a half years of growth, and our weaknesses were masked. Once things slowed down, we asked, 'Where are the guest and package rounds? The way to do that is through quality, culture, service, amenities and golf course conditions.'"

So Troyanoski made changes working with the current structure and hired Paul R. Latshaw, who brought clarity and vision, as a consultant. Latshaw helped Troyanoski before at Roycebrook Golf Club in Hillsborough, N.J. But some things didn't change, such as golf course superintendent Scott Dickson and the maintenance budget (\$1.3 million) because there was no need to change those, Troyanoski says.

"It was a perfect example of good superintendent with less than spectacular leadership (from management)," he says.

Troyanoski, Dickson and Latshaw are working to get a healthy stand of ryegrass in the fairways, eliminating the bentgrass that contaminates it and relieving compaction.

"We needed to change the soils," Troyanoski says. "We've added gypsum and more organics. We have some work to do on greens to get them where they need to be. We also purchased equipment such as an AerWay vertiquake and eradicated the *Poa* with chemicals. There's no secret to this. It's a timing and persistence issue, not a labor or budget issue. Killing turf is tough. It's hard to sell the future."

Sometimes the wrong equipment is being used to maintain golf courses and is actually damaging a golf course, Troyanoski says.

"A triplex is used on slopes and hills, and when it turns, it will rip up the turf," he says. "People use a triplex attempting to save man hours, but they're actually tearing up the turf. Green surrounds are more

busy than fairways, and if green surrounds are ripped up, that's what golfers will see."

Troyanoski also looked at the history of outside guest play and only to find rounds had been declining for three years. However, guest rounds have increased this year and are expected to eclipse 12,000 after declining to 9,000.

"The golf course is our engine," he says. "Without the golf course, Saddle Creek is a beautiful place with something missing."

Amid improvements, competition in the area is expected to heat up.

"There will be two to three golf courses added in the next five years," Troyanoski says. "We're aware of the competition, but we're not letting the competition dictate what we do. You need to be prepared to be a leader. You want to set the pace, not somebody else."

ACCEPTABLE AGAIN

To improve its status in the market, Four Seasons is improving the conditions of the two courses at the Four Seasons Resort and Club Dallas at Las Colinas in Irving, Texas. Four Seasons renovated the 27-year-old, 18-hole Cottonwood Valley Golf Course, and currently is reconstructing the Tournament Players Course, which is estimated to cost \$8 million. Everything is being renovated on the TPC course, but it won't be rerouted, says golf course superintendent Rusty Wilson.

Wilson says the family-oriented club is considered a value in the area. Wilson, who has been there a little longer than three years, says the initiation fee is \$50,000, which includes use of two golf courses, spas, pro shop and tennis courts. Higher-end clubs in the area cost \$125,000 to



Troyanoski

\$150,000 just for golf, he says.

The club, which has 700 golfing members and hosts the EDS Byron Nelson Championship every year, had been struggling with membership, and course condition was one of the reasons, Wilson says. So members wanted the renovation. Last year, Cottonwood's green complexes were renovated, the tees were leveled and the bunkers were renovated. The old greens were built on calcareous sand, and the turf had short roots. The *Poa annua* greens were contaminated with Bermudagrass, which is in the fairways and approaches.

"The product, including the putting green quality, was unacceptable," Wilson says.

The renovation of Cottonwood – the course closed from July 15 to January 15 – cost about \$2 million. Four Seasons paid for the renovation; members weren't assessed. An LS 44/962 blend of bentgrass is now on the greens and sand was added to the clay-based tees. The fairways are still 419 Bermudagrass. Landscapes Unlimited renovated the greens and tees, and C.R. Sanders renovated the bunkers. Jay Morrish was the architect.

"When we did bunker renovation, we added excessive drainage in a box formation nine feet apart like greens construction," Wilson says.

Originally, the renovation project was going to be a three-year plan, renovating six holes at a time, but Four Seasons decided to take the

hit right away and do the whole thing at once, Wilson says.

Associated with the renovation, there's been a marketing strategy from the beginning, Wilson says.

"The selling point now is to get in at a lower price because when the TPC course is finished, fees will increase because we'll have two new golf courses. Because of this strategy, membership has increased."

GOLF AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Shawnee Inn and Golf Resort in Shawnee on Delaware, Pa., recently renovated its golf facility, turning one 18-hole course (originally designed by A.W. Tillinghast), one nine-hole course and a driving range into a 27-hole championship golf course and a par-3 course.

Being right next to the Delaware River can cause problems. The river recently flooded the golf course, which has been closed at various times for six weeks during the past three years. As a result of the flood, electrical service was lost on the lower level, and DensGlass (gypsum sheathing) was installed next to the river. The flood hurt the resort financially because golf is normally 30 percent of its revenue.

"There's a lot of talk about water management, but there's not much to be done," says general manager Rob Howell. "It's life on the Delaware. We tout our location on the Delaware River,

even though Mother Nature has taught us she's the boss."

There are two courses within 10 minutes of the resort – one is a Jack Nicklaus design and the other is a Donald Ross design. The facility's competition is other resorts.

"We're trying to market Shawnee as a golf destination," Howell says. "We're targeting the East Coast. We're only 75 miles outside New York City."

As part of that mission, management built a golf academy and the three-hole short game area designed by Tom Doak, who ended up designing a nine-hole course. Part of the Approach Course doubles as a driving range. Tee times for the Approach Course, which is lighted, are from 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. The lighting decision wasn't made with marketing research, it was more an intuitive decision by the owner, Charles Kirkwood, Howell says.

"Night golf is steadily improving," Howell says.

The new course layout was designed to give those who are intimidated by 18 holes, and those who work all day and would like to play at night, an opportunity to play nine holes.

"However, we do get golfers who play 27 holes in one day," Howell says. "There's a historical significance to it because architect A.W. Tillinghast's first design was here."

Staffing has been increased to support the recent renovation at Shawnee, which opened in 1911 and hosted the 1938 PGA championship. The golf course maintenance staff was beefed up for the Approach Course and instructors were hired for the golf academy.

The resort, which added outdoor dining for golfers, is focusing on an Audubon program for the 27-hole championship course, not the Approach Course. They should be certified in five or six years, Howell says.

"We're going through a renaissance of focusing on our history, golf and the environment," Howell says. **GCI**

Eliminating bentgrass that was contaminating ryegrass in the fairways and reducing thatch were top priorities to improve course conditions at Saddle Creek. Photo: Saddle Creek Resort



At Hamilton Farm Golf Club, superintendent Ray Viera faces challenges such as growing bentgrass in humid conditions and water management. Photo: Hamilton Farm



Exclusive ranks

Newly assembled managers at **HAMILTON FARM** aim to raise the profile of the New Jersey facility

By Mark Leslie

Dream teams. Think of them, and you envision Michael Jordan, Larry Bird and Magic Johnson. Or, perhaps, Johnnie Cochran, F. Lee Bailey, Alan Dershowitz and Robert Shapiro.

Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Gladstone, N.J., has assembled its own version of a dream team: the trio of “swing doctor” and author Mike Adams, longtime Oakmont (Pa.) Golf Club assistant pro Steve Archer, and notable bentgrass superintendent Ray Viera.

In one fell swoop, general manager Tim Bakels, newly on board with the mandate to put together one of the best management teams in the country, brought in these three industry professionals this past spring. Archer joined Hamilton Farm as director of golf in early April, Viera as superintendent in late April and Adams as director of instruction in early May. There was only one thing in mind.

“Our goal is to establish Hamilton Farm as the most exclusive, highly sought-after membership in America,” says Bakels, who joined the club last August after eight years at Desert Highlands in Scottsdale, Ariz. “And we’ve brought in three of the strongest names in the business to accomplish this goal.”



Hamilton Farm's management team: From left, Ray Viera, Steve Archer, Tim Bakels and Mike Adams.



The management team is focusing on providing the finest service and amenities in terms of overall experience. Photo: Hamilton Farm

From service to teaching to course conditioning, Viera's goal is to reach "Top 100 Modern Course" status quickly. It's a concerted effort to recruit the top pros and put Hamilton Farm in the bracket it belongs, he says.

"Basically, we're here to put Hamilton Farm on the map," says Adams, a former PGA Tour pro who's director of the PGA's National Academy of Golf at Palm Beach, Fla. "My job is to make everybody play better, and the rest of the staff's is to make their time here as enjoyable as possible. Ray's job is to make the golf course as beautiful as possible so people will enjoy playing it. Steve is a great player, merchandiser and teacher – the total package."

Archer, 36, deflects the praise of the club professional to his former mentor, Bob Ford of Oakmont Golf Club. But he believes he has learned how to attract members to private clubs of this stature.

"There are no secrets," Archer says. "It's a

warm greeting and a fond farewell, the traditional ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen. We want the finest service and amenities available in terms of the overall experience. Every need is taken care of as soon as you come on the property until you leave, whether it's with your golf game, fine dining or all the things that we offer. It's an atmosphere of service. We try to attend to every detail and need and to think ahead so members and their guests are overwhelmed with a 'wow' factor when they come through the gates."

THE LURE

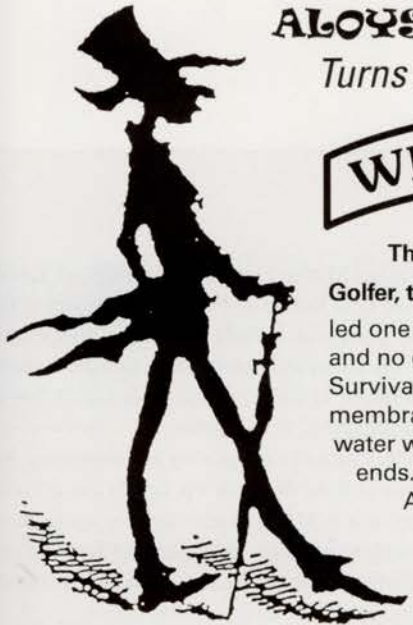
The cornerstone of the club is the championship-length, 18-hole Highlands Course and its companion Hickory Course, the only USGA-rated par-3 track in the country. Both were designed by Michael Hurdzan, Ph.D., and Dana Fry. Sculpted bunkers with high sand flashing, a hardwood forest setting along highlands and vistas stretching toward the Hudson River dramatize golf at Hamilton Farm.

The golf course, Georgian mansion, lodge and clubhouse were enough to pull Adams and Archer away from other facilities.

"It's the total package, from the physical plant to the golf course," says the 53-year-old Adams. "Every golf hole offers a different challenge and plays differently every day, depending on the wind conditions. There are many changes in elevation, lots of trees and water, and it's in immaculate shape. After my visit and speaking with Steve, I realized this is the right place to be."

Adams' relationship with longtime friend Archer played a considerable role in his decision to teach at Hamilton Farm during the summer and return to Florida during the winter. Archer, who co-founded AMF Golf Management, a professional recruiting firm that hires professionals for top private clubs, was glad he made the move to Hamilton Farm.

"We have the facilities, and now we have the team to take Hamilton Farm to the next level and hit every facet of our operation," he says. "On the instruction side, we have Mike and Karen Noble, one of our assistant teaching professionals who played the LPGA Tour for 10 years. On the turf side, we have Ray and his assistant, Patrick Husby. From the professional side, we have me and Matt Freitag, our head golf professional who's here year round."



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- 1983** "...We use city water – we're on a meter. Based on comparable figures for 1980, **we reduced water use by 20%** in 1983..."
- 1985** "...This year we would water Friday night, and then wouldn't water again until Sunday night. We **used 30% less water...** didn't syringe once this year... just didn't need it! When we first went on water restrictions, **SURFSIDE 37 kept our fairways alive** during that long July/August stretch. **You can use it anytime... it doesn't matter how hot it is.** We held our worst fairway with a total of 5 gals. per acre..."
- 1988** "... With SURFSIDE and our hand-watering program, we only **water greens two times a week.** We required **50% to 70% less water** on greens than when I arrived two and a half years ago. We spike and top dress the greens every two weeks, and apply SURFSIDE 37 following these cultural procedures. We also Hydroject ten of our twenty greens each week from April until September. We use the SURFSIDE PELLETS on the hose via the Hydroject. This works great in getting the product into the root zone. SURFSIDE 37 is a vital part of our turf management program..."
- 1993** "...**I saved more than 90% of my syringe labor budget.** Afternoon watering was basically eliminated. During the summer of 1993 we syringed less than ten times in the afternoons. During the summer of 1994 we only had to syringe two afternoons. SURFSIDE 37 has **helped eliminate hard to wet areas;** by treating the entire green complex, water movement through the soil has been improved. This has **decreased the need for daily irrigation,** and **nearly eliminates the need to syringe during the day.** **We have saved our operation over \$7,000 per year in labor costs** during the summers of 1993 and 1994..."



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The Highlands Course is set amid a hardwood forest and offers vistas stretching toward the Hudson River. Photo: Hamilton Farm

THE RIGHT CHOICE

To find the right superintendent, Bakels called Phil Shoemaker Jr., the superintendent at his former club, Desert Highlands, and asked for a recommendation. The answer: Ray Viera. Shoemaker suggested Bakels call Rutgers University for a reference. So Bakels asked a professor who he would recommend for the job. The answer: Ray Viera.

“At that point, it seemed pretty obvious who our choice should be,” Bakels says.

When Bakels gave Viera the call, Viera was working at The Members Club at Four Streams in Beallsville, Md. The club’s members have

included Michael Jordan, Washington Capitals goalie Olaf Kolzig and various members of the U.S. Congress. Bakels convinced Viera, who cut his agronomic teeth as an assistant superintendent at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton, N.Y., to visit.

Viera earned a reputation for conquering *Poa annua* at Four Streams – a significant achievement in the Mid-Atlantic. By July, using plant growth regulators, changing the fertility and reducing water use to create firm and fast conditions, he rid the course of *Poa annua*.



Viera’s reputation also included dealing with members ably and, as he says, understanding the mechanisms by which memberships work and what they desire at the higher level – a level that includes senators, professional athletes and others who guard their privacy. At Hamilton Farm, where the membership fee is \$300,000, that trait is a plus.

“Ray is equally talented with a balance sheet

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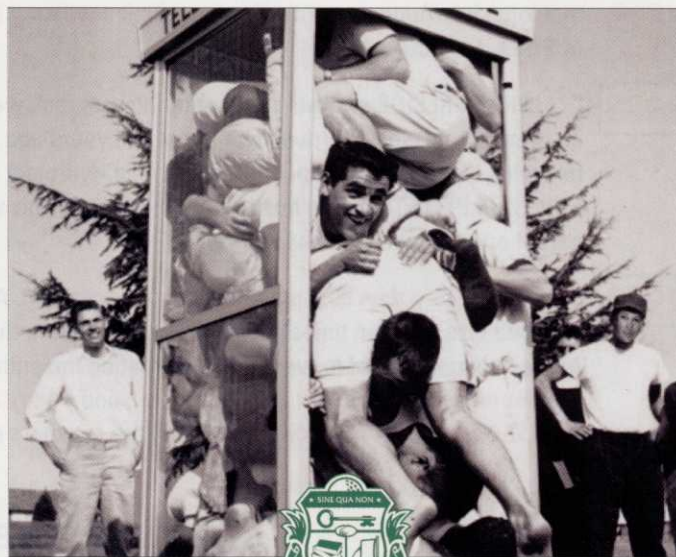



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