

# PRIMING FOR THE PGA

The clock will be ticking  
on Medinah's high-speed  
mowing team

**O**N PREPARING THE FAMED No. 3 COURSE of the Medinah CC for the 1999 PGA Championship, grounds manager and CGCS Danny Quast takes the attitude of a man who has been down this fairway before.

"This isn't rocket science," he says. "Everything you do to a course leading up to a major tournament, including the changes you make, should be done two to three years beforehand. When it comes down to the tournament, all you're doing is mowing more often and a little shorter and making things a little firmer and faster. I try to avoid a crisis management situation. You don't need that the week of a tournament."

## Experience counts

Quast knows something about preparing a course for a major tournament. Since coming to Chicago's Medinah in 1989, Quast and his crew — which grows to 65 in the summer and to 100 for tournaments — have prepped the 70-year-old club's championship course for the 1990 U.S. Open. Quast's knack for planning ahead will once again come into play in seven years when the club hosts the 2006 PGA Championship. The Ryder Cup will be at Medinah in 2011.

Not one to crave the spotlight, Quast points out that he could not get the job

▲ Riding greensmowers will be used to mow the fairways of Medinah's No. 3 course for the 1999 PGA Championship. The mowers' tighter turning radius will help prevent tire tracks in the primary rough.

► Medinah grounds manager Danny Quast will direct an army of more than 100 staff and volunteers to prepare and maintain the No. 3 course for the PGA Championship.



PHOTOS BY DAN BRICE/BBD PHOTOGRAPHY



done without the professionalism and assistance of the No. 3 course's superintendents, Keith Peterson and Reynaldo Tijerina.

"I can't say enough about the job these guys do," he says. "We couldn't be successful without the talents they bring to the table — Reynaldo's years of experience and communication skills, and Keith's attention to detail."

But Quast's praise goes even deeper. "I want to share the success of this tournament; that's important right down to the guys who are raking bunkers, mowing fairways and greens, and cutting the intermediate rough. Everybody's jobs are important. I have 680 acres to look after, and without good people it would be an impossible chore."

And the chores, especially where the PGA Championship is concerned, are considerable. Medinah's championship course has seen increased greens speed through grooming, more frequent topdressing and the use of Primo growth regulator. Old and dying trees are being pruned or removed. Nearly all of the 4,500 oak, hickory and ash trees remaining on the course are meticulously maintained by the club's resident arborist, Bob Camp.

Other changes to the course have included bunker

renovation, new tee boxes on the 2nd and 13th holes, and new hydraulic hoses on all the mowers to avoid turf-damaging leaks.

Though course No. 3 is kept in near-championship condition throughout the playing season, specific preparations will inevitably need to be made to make Medinah the ultimate challenge for the PGA's best.

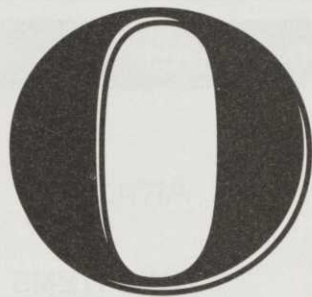
Not only will the 81st PGA Championship be the longest in history (7,401 yards from the tips), it will feature a very "un-PGA" primary rough, which will measure a punishing 4 inches by the time of the tournament. At the direction of the PGA, the roughs will be set 44 inches from the greens and chipping areas, and 72 inches from the fairways. To accomplish this, the rough mowers at Medinah will fall silent two weeks or so before the championship.

Medinah's roughs will be about the only place on the course that will be silent during the tournament. Quast, Peterson and Tijerina have set a lofty goal of mowing the entire championship course in just two hours every day during the tournament. To handle the workload, course No. 3 will be divided into four sections to be supervised by Peterson, Tijerina, Jon Thorn-

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**"I have 680 acres to look after, and without good people it would be an impossible chore."**

**- Danny Quast, CGCS**



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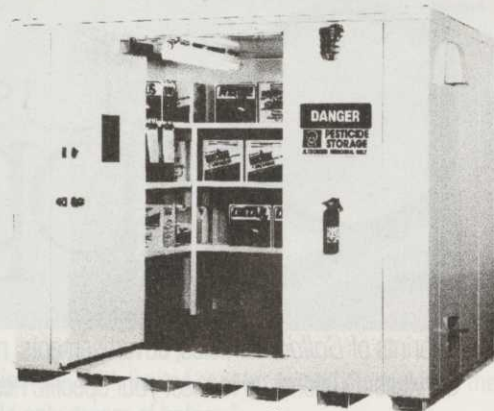
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### The fleet of four mowers will mow a checkerboard striping pattern on the fairways.

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son (superintendent of course No. 1) and Erik Swensen (superintendent of course No. 2).

"Four guys will mow a fairway at once and one guy will cut the greens. As we get additional equipment here, we'll start doing time trials," Peterson says. "We'll make adjustments as we go."

#### Start your engines

As of mid-June, Medinah's version of an Indy pit crew had proven that it can already cut the entire championship course in about 2.5 hours by using the staff and equipment from all three of its courses. By the time the PGA Championship rolls around, the addition of maintenance volunteers, consultants from Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products and new equipment should bring them closer to their goal of two hours.

If mowing an entire golf course in just two hours isn't unusual enough, it's the way in which the fairways will be cut that seems to have piqued Quast's interest the most. "The biggest change we'll have in preparing for the tournament is going to be the addition of the Jacobsen riding greensmowers on the fairways," he says. "The reason for using greensmowers is the (tight) turn-

ing radius and light weight. We'll be able to turn them on the intermediate rough and not worry about tire tracks in the primary rough."

The fleet of four mowers will mow a checkerboard striping pattern on the fairways. "The smoothness of a mower's cut, and the texture and playability of the grass are most important," Quast adds. "But appearance is nice, too. It makes the course stand out on television."

As Quast says, this isn't rocket science, but it is intense. Up to the time the first practice shot is fired down fairway No. 1, Quast's crew will be busy hand-watering aprons, collars and greens, making fungicide applications, double-cutting greens and other chores.

"The secret is to get everything done right, double-check everything you do and get it done in a timely manner," Quast says. "When you think about it, the course we maintain for the tournament shrinks. Right now, we maintain the whole course. As the tournament approaches, the only thing that matters (from a maintenance standpoint) is what goes on inside the ropes." ■

*Editor's note: Tom Mentzer, the author of this story, is a public relations counsel for several companies in the turf maintenance industry.*

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