

Bring on the Night

Here's how to supply the 'daylight' to rebuild bunkers and perform other construction projects under the moon

BY MARK LESLIE

Lights, excavator, action! Excavator? Yes, the suggestion here is: If you must use heavy equipment for major construction work — such as rebuilding bunkers, lasering tee boxes and installing fairway irrigation or drainage — do it at night under banks of lights.

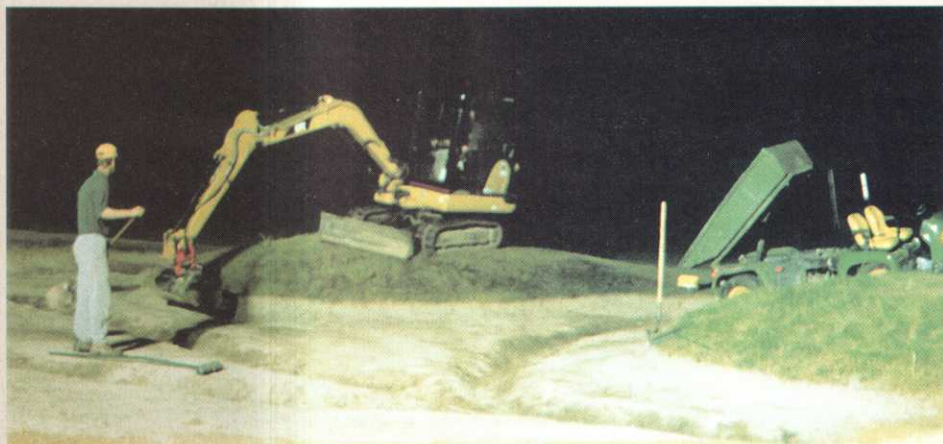
Prompting this idea is Cal Roth, director of golf course maintenance for the PGA Tour's 24 Tournament Players Clubs. He has instituted a policy that asks his superintendents to perform

Problem

Major golf course renovation projects often get in the way of golfers, who aren't happy that they shelled out \$50 to \$150 to play around a bunker renovation. You know the thinking: *Nothing* comes before customer service.

Solution

Bring in banks of lights and night shift crew workers, and conduct the renovation projects at night.



tasks such as aerification, overseeding and heavy verticutting before play begins and after it ends.

"We [use the strategy] with slow cultural practices that are disruptive to the playing surface and the customer," Roth says. "Crews go in behind the last starting time, follow that group and work into the evening until 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. In the morning, they start ahead of play and try to accomplish the task over a two- or three-day period."

But major construction work during off-hours? While noise ordinances prevent this type of operation in some places, it's still the solution to the age-old quandary of how to renovate without bothering golfers for many golf course maintenance staffs.

There is one simple key: Surmount that most bothersome problem — no daylight at midnight — by supplying the "daylight" yourself with a generator-operated,

A major bunker renovation at night is easier than you might think if all the proper ingredients are in place.

mobile lighting system, like those used in nighttime highway construction.

Here's a scenario considered for a massive bunker restoration project at a Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed golf course in Maine:

- Set up a night shift crew to work 10-hour nights four days a week, starting each night once the sun sets over the mountain and the last golfer has left the course.

- Tackle one bunker at a time. Each night, remove the old sand, core out the bunker, then install new drainage pipe and clean-outs.

Cover the pipe with a 1-inch layer of sand, then spray a fiberglass-type material called Klingstone, which binds the sand and creates a barrier between the old subgrade and new

sand, and prevents gravel from migrating into the sand over time.

This product will save the course a lot in labor costs if they had planned on using clay. The time to put in clay takes half a day per bunker, but Klingstone only takes 10 minutes.

However, since Klingstone needs several hours to work its magic, operations need to be shut down.

- The next night, fill the bunker with sand and begin the work on the next bunker. Start and finish one bunker every night.

Golfers will never know the work is going on — with the exception of a single bunker.

Ah, the night shift. It's a mode of operation that could revolutionize major construction work on many golf courses. Just charge up the heavy equipment and flick on the light switch. ■

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