

Off The Fringe

Gift of Mobility

GOLF PAYS TRIBUTE TO OLD TOM MORRIS – AND THOSE WHO MAY NEVER KNOW THE JOYS OF GOLF

By James E. Guyette

Keeping their promise to help others in need, a U.S. chapter of Keepers of the Green once again donated a powered wheelchair to a handicapped person at the international golf fraternity's annual fall World Invitational Championship, held last month at two golf courses in Alabama. The wheelchair is courtesy of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design, which started the chapter.

"It brings tears to your eyes when you see this," says Mike Hurdzan of Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design in Columbus, Ohio. "It is a true fellowship of golf. It removes all the pretense of worrying about slope ratings."

Hurdzan spearheaded forming of the chapter four years ago after learning of the organization's good works. The inter-



HURDZAN/FRY GOLF COURSE DESIGN

Mike Hurdzan (right) spearheaded the forming of Keepers of the Green. The group presents a powered wheelchair to a handicapped person during its annual championship.

national membership "has presented hundreds of wheelchairs to deserving people who may never know the joys of golf, but will know the joy of mobility," Hurdzan says.

The organization, headquartered in St. Andrews, Scotland, promotes the traditions of golf while paying tribute to Old Tom Morris, known as "the father of greenkeeping."

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Superintendents in Florida and the Carolinas, where alligators are common, will feel some empathy with Mochudi's crocodile problem. Actually, the crocs are not much of an agronomic problem. But they can be a problem for players. Posted signs warn golfers about the presence of crocs in ponds and other water features. Any duffer who wants to bet a leg or hand against a dollar golf ball can feel free to do so.

However, it is the mammals that are more trouble on the turf.

"I'm not worried about the fairways," Mochudi says. "It's the greens where they cause the problems."

The greens are full of tender, luscious grass. It's like Mochudi is one of the resort's chefs, putting out a feast for the visitors.

The warthogs are especially persistent. There is a group of about a dozen warthogs that make Mochudi's life interesting. "We can't cull them," he says, noting that the nearby game reserves and national parks are the main reason visitors come to that corner of Botswana. "In some ways, they are almost tame," he continues.

That shows up in the boldness with which they dig at the No. 9 green, just a short putt from the clubhouse. However, it is on the more remote No. 4 (a 375-yard par 4) and No. 5 (a huge 519-yard par 5) holes that the warthogs are all but permanent residents. In fact, a mother and two youngsters seem to call No. 5 home.



CURT HARLER

Elephants regularly take early-morning strolls across the greens, causing much the same kind of damage one would see if a human were to track on a dew-covered green. But bigger.

Most other management practices in this area of Southern Africa would be familiar to any superintendent working in a subtropical setting. Grass on greens is cut between one-quarter inch and one-eighth inch through the warm season. Greens consist of semidwarf bermudagrass and bentgrass and are cut daily. They also receive 20 minutes to 25 minutes of irrigation water.

Buffalograss is planted on the semirough areas. The fairways are a local grass which stands up well to the heat, seasonal rainfall and grazing by wild animals. In the winter (the warm season), fairways are mowed twice a week. They also are irrigated twice weekly.

Fertilizer is applied regularly. A local complete blend, called LA-3, is sprayed with the irrigation water.

Mochudi walks out into the sunshine and waves his arms at the warthogs, which have moved on to ripping up the collar on the No. 9 green. The warthogs look up. An observer could almost swear that the warthogs wave back. Then they go on eating the sweet grass.

"Aaah, I've got other things to do," Mochudi says, frustration in his voice.

"Hey, do you have problems with snow mold?" his visitor asks.

"Huh?" Mochudi says puzzledly.

That's one concern superintendents don't have in Botswana.