



PHOTO BY: CRAIG ZELLERS

SUPERINTENDENT SPENDS WINTER TENDING TO GOLF COURSE SNOWMOBILE BUSINESS

By Craig F. Zellers

David Laurie didn't spend the winter inside his maintenance facility watching the snowflakes fall. Instead, he was out working in the white stuff.

Laurie, the superintendent at Old Brockway Golf Course in Kings Beach, Calif., oversaw the rental of snowmobiles to tourists looking for a little winter fun. The snowmobiles are allowed to run in a loop starting down the left side of hole No. 1. Riders roar out toward the first green, turn around at the ropes and return down the right side of the fairway.

As a superintendent, Laurie knows the snowmobiles hurt the turf agronomically. The weight of the machines compacts the snow and creates a layer of impermeable ice in the upper soil profile. This leads to suffocation of the turf and prevents gaseous exchanges. When the snow melts, Laurie must aerify, seed, irrigate and compost excessively just to overcome the detrimental effects of the snowmobiles.

But he doesn't mind. The snowmobile business makes him the only year-round maintenance employee at Old Brockway. When he's not renting snowmobiles, he's doing other chores, such as removing trees, rebuilding equipment, maintaining golf cars and doing paper work.

With the arrival of spring, Laurie looks forward to the return of assistant superintendent Mo Mailhot and mechanic Ron Cochran. Three greenkeepers also return from Mexico to help Laurie maintain the course during golf season.

The snowmobile business has sure helped Laurie turn a tool more efficiently. He says he's become a much better mechanic than he ever anticipated.

Craig F. Zellers is a Toro Golf Irrigation sales representative for Turf Star in California. In a previous life, he was a superintendent.

Quotable

"One of the greatest football games I ever played happened when I was 9 years old. I scored 51 touchdowns and had more than 500 yards rushing against Nicky."

— Rocky Bleier, former Pittsburgh Steeler running back, recalling a one-on-one football game against his childhood friend during his keynote address at the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference & Show in March.

"That show was just hectic."

— Irrigation consultant Dave Davis on getting around at the sizable Golf Industry Show.

"Hooters has signed golfer John Daly to an endorsement contract. The restaurant chain believes it has finally found an athletic spokesman who can credibly claim that he really does go to Hooters for the wings."

— Pete McEntergart of SI.com on Daly's diet.

"Except during the nine months before he draws his first breath, no man manages his affairs as well as a tree does."

— Playwright George Bernard Shaw on trees.

"This morning the course was in perfect shape. Then Mother Nature had to go and mess it up."

— Fred Klauk, superintendent of the TPC at Sawgrass, on the Friday afternoon after play was suspended during the rain-soaked Players Championship in March (pgatour.com).