

"I WON'T HAVE TO TOUCH THAT BUNKER AGAIN."



Fall River Country Club was built in 1895 into the rolling New England landscape. A particularly hilly course, water tends to channel and run when it rains. But for 25-year superintendent Tom Ohlson, washouts are a thing of the past thanks to BunkerGuard.



"We had torrential rains last year. We installed BunkerGuard on our most severe bunker, and that was the only one that didn't have a problem. The beauty of BunkerGuard is that it gives sand something to grip onto, which eliminates the contamination erosion causes. I could have saved a lot of money over the years with BunkerGuard both in initial construction and day-to-day upkeep. But it's not really the money, it's the disruption factor that's so huge. The fewer times I have to disrupt our golfers' season to work on bunkers, the better. With BunkerGuard in my arsenal of weapons, I won't have to touch that bunker again."

Tom Ohlson, CGCS, Golf Course Superintendent
Fall River Country Club, Fall River, MA



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NORTH AMERICAN GREEN



The No. 16 fairway was washed out and transformed into a river during Hurricane Frances.

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about their community than their golf course the days following the storm. So they took to the roads around the club and removed fallen trees and other debris so vehicles could get through. "It took a couple days to get the roads cleaned up," Money says.

The golf course was a sorry sight. About 380 of the 400 trees leveled during the hurricanes were felled during Charley. The club hired an Atlanta-based tree-removal company to help remove the fallen timber.

But unsightly debris speckled the landscape like garbage strewn about an unkempt city park. Brian Poorman, the club's assistant superintendent, wondered how in the heck the 17-member maintenance crew was going to clean up such a mess.

"I remember thinking, 'Man, where do we start?'" Poorman says. "I thought, 'Are we really going to get through this?'"

Poorman didn't know at the time that they would have to "get through this" a few times.

Long before the 2004 hurricane season, the Country Club of Orlando had been planning a major golf course renovation, headed by Uxbridge, Mass.-based architect Brian Silva. The club's goal was to return the course, designed in 1911 by Donald Ross, to its classic look. Silva had also renovated parts of the course, which was redesigned by Robert Trent Jones in 1959, in the late '80s.

TDI International, a Stuart, Fla.-based builder, was hired to repair problem drainage

throughout the course. The renovation also included a new Rain Bird irrigation system.

The fairways were recontoured so water could move off them quickly and into basins. The fairways were also regrassed with 419 bermudagrass. The greens were scraped down 4 inches to 6 inches, topped with a new greens mix and regrassed with TifDwarf. The domed tees were laser-leveled to sport a more classic and squared look. About 400 trees were removed from the course as part of the renovation before the storms hit.

Money, who has worked on golf course renovations before, was hired partly for his experience in that area. The club also spent about \$200,000 on equipment upgrades.

The club wanted a renovated golf course to match its elegant new clubhouse that was built a few years before. The course shut down in April for the renovation and planned to reopen in mid-November for a grand celebration.

Of course, that was before Mother Nature spoke.

Fortunately, most of the renovation was complete before the first hurricane hit. But Charley's rain and wind wiped out parts of six fairways that had been recently sprigged. It took about two weeks to clean up the course's greens, fairways, tees and roughs after Charley, and to resprig the six holes, Money says.

Then it was time to batten the hatches again and ride out Hurricane Frances. Its pounding

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Employees from the club's myriad departments pitched into help. They included chefs, waiters, bartenders, locker-room attendants, receptionists and people from the pro shop.

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rains washed out the sprigged holes again.

Silva visited the club in October, a short time after the fourth hurricane, and says he was shaken by the damage.

"I never thought it would be a golf course again," he says. "It was, at the very least, an entirely depressing scene."

But Silva was inspired by the never-say-die attitude that Money, Poorman, Shaw and the others exhibited to turn things around.

"I never sensed that they felt sorry for themselves," Silva says. "They never said, 'Woe is us.' They just got it done."

They got it done by making gutsy decisions. For instance, with fall rapidly approaching, Money knew the bermudagrass fairways wouldn't have the heat they needed to grow. He and the green committee realized the washed-out areas would have to be sodded if they were to grow in proficiently.

David Shaw, president of the green committee, called a meeting shortly after Frances hit and the sprigs had been washed out a second time. It was a pivotal meeting, Shaw says, because the green committee had to make a difficult and expensive decision on the spot to order 10 acres of sod to replace the washed-out sprigs.

Looking back — and not knowing at the time that Hurricane Jeanne would have wiped out a third round of sprigs — Shaw says he was glad the board acted swiftly and made the decision to order the sod. (For the record, Money's crew installed the sod just in time for Hurricane Jeanne to hit.)

"The sod saved our fanny," Shaw says. "If

we hadn't made that decision on the spot. ..."

If they hadn't made that decision, the course would still be closed.

Money, Shaw and others from the Country Club of Orlando will never forget the hurricane season of 2004. But also engraved in their memories will be how employees of the club rose to the occasion and did what they had to do to clean up the golf course.

Employees from the club's myriad departments pitched in to help. They included chefs, waiters, bartenders, locker-room attendants, receptionists and people from the pro shop.

"Granted, it was a situation where you didn't get paid if you didn't come to work," says Jerry Valone, the club's general manager. "But if you weren't going to work in the kitchen, you were going to have to work on the golf course. And you were going to sweat. But there wasn't one person that whined about it."

Valone knew most everyone who worked at the club had to deal with their own set of problems at home — from lack of electricity to leaking roofs. But they still showed up for work.

Money, who isn't afraid to get down and dirty, led the clean-up brigade.

"And it's not like he put on a different hat after the storms," Valone says. "He's been that way since he came here. He's not afraid to get in there and do it. He has a whatever-it-takes attitude."

Poorman is the same way, says Valone, who relates a story about the 46-year-old assistant during the night that Frances hit. Valone and his family came to the club to wait out the storm. Poorman also showed up at the club. During the storm, a tree was downed across the road leading to the club's front entrance. Valone says Poorman went out during the storm with a chainsaw to remove the tree from the road.

The clean-up efforts were hard work for everyone, but rewarding as well.

"It wasn't a job that you'd like to do every day," Money says. "But under the circumstances, it was more like camaraderie, not work."

Charles Bailes, a member of the club's board of directors and the board's liaison to the green committee, says the club's employees showed their true character in working together to clean up the course.

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"There's nothing more rewarding than to see the determination and commitment of people when things aren't good," Bailes says. "I hope I never have to go through anything like that again, but it was a great experience from that perspective."

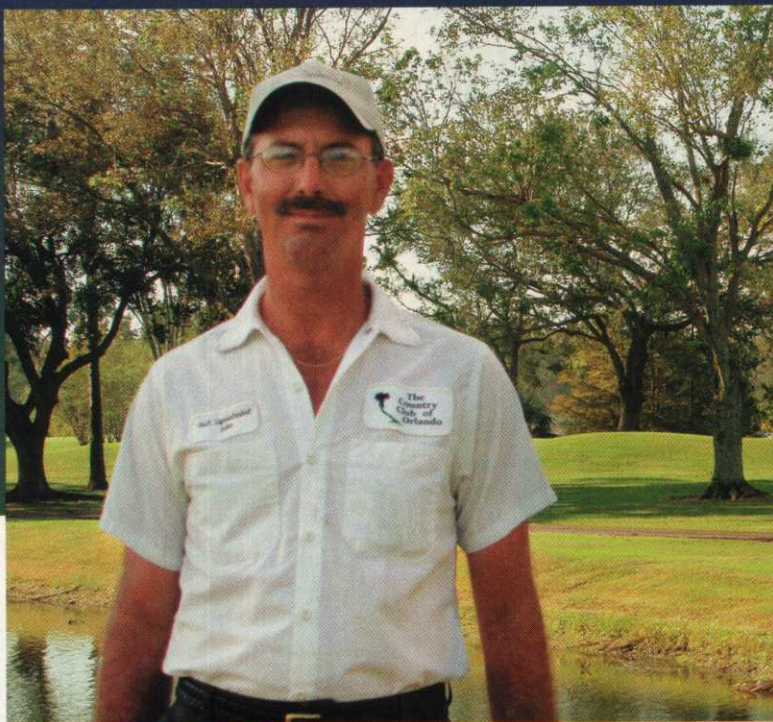
Davis was astounded by the employees' efforts. "It was nothing but stellar," he says.

Davis' comment brings to light the positive relationship that many of the club's members have with the employees. Valone, who has worked as the general manager at Medinah (Ill.) Country Club and other prestigious clubs, says the membership at Orlando is one of the best for which he has ever worked.

Green committee members are awed that the course has come this far. There is an ever-encompassing sense of relief among them.

"A lot of the members here don't treat the staff like employees," says Valone, in his fifth year at the club. "They treat them like family."

Because of their mutual respect, Money says he, the green committee and other decision makers were able to act quickly when making important choices together.



LARRY AYLWARD

"It was as coordinated a team effort as I've ever seen — from the green committee to the members to the management team," Ellison says.

At a green committee meeting in November, several issues are discussed as the course prepares for its grand reopening, which is about six weeks away and only a month later than the original date. Most of the green committee members are awed that the course has come this far. There is an ever-encompassing sense of relief among them.

Everyone agrees that if the renovation hadn't been undertaken, the Country Club of Orlando might not have been able to open until this summer because of worse damage that would have been caused by the hurricanes.

Had the 400 trees not been removed during the renovation, the course could have lost hundreds of more trees than it did during the hurricanes, especially Charley, Ellison says. When the trees were removed during the renovation, the course became more open and wind could circulate through the area more easily. If the trees had been left in place, an enormous wind canopy would have been created with various air funnels that might have brought many more trees down, Ellison explains. This happened at other Orlando courses.

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Assistant Superintendent Brian Poorman is described as having a whatever-it-takes-to-get-the-job-done attitude.

Weathered the Storms

COUNTRY CLUB OF ORLANDO



One the weekend of Dec. 17, the course reopened for play. It was joyous occasion for all, including (left to right) David Shaw, Steve Money, Glen Davis, Brian Silva and Jimmy Ellison.

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"And they will never look the same," Ellison says.

If the drainage had not been installed, the course's fairways would have remained under water for a longer period of time, says Bruce Sheldon, regional operations manager for TDI International. "Without the new drainage there would have been more dead turf," he says.

Also, the heavy rains that accompanied the hurricanes revealed other areas on the course that needed improved drainage. Hence, TDI International returned to lay about 3,000 feet of additional drainage pipe on four holes.

"We wouldn't have done that if the storms hadn't hit," Money says. "And a couple of years down the road we would have needed to do it."

Nobody wants to dwell too much on the hurricanes, but most everyone at the club shakes their heads in amazement when they talk about how the storms kept coming, one after another.

"The superintendents in Florida call it the summer of CFIJ," Ellison says, reciting the beginning letters of each hurricane. "It will go down in the history books."

In the midst of the four hurricanes, Sheldon says he thought of the old Jimmy Buffett song, "Tryin' to Reason With Hurricane Season."

"But you just can't reason with it," Sheldon says. "You just have to deal with it and go on."

And that's what they did. On the weekend of Dec. 17 the Country Club of Orlando

reopened for play. It was a joyous occasion. "You would never have known that it was anything other than a perfect year to grow in a golf course," Silva says. "The place was in pristine condition."

"The course was in wonderful shape," Shaw adds. "The members' feedback was that the course exceeded their expectations. It was a very special day for me personally and very gratifying for all involved."

It was especially gratifying for Money, even though he admits he was exhausted when the grand reopening was over. "It was a good day, and I was fortunate enough to be part of it," he says.

In early January, Money looked back on the previous year, as many people do. So much of what he experienced was new — a new job, a new home and a new son born to Money and his wife on Father's Day. And then there were the four new on-the-job experiences, as in hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne.

There was a lot going on in Money's life, and, looking back, he says he couldn't have made it through without a little help from his friends, as in his co-workers and the club's members. Money, sitting comfortably at his small, tattered desk in his pint-sized office with two neatly framed photos of his son nearby, says he's never felt more at home than at the Country Club of Orlando.

"They make you *feel* like you're wanted and needed," he says of the club's members and staff, the gratefulness evident in his voice.

A lot of people at the club will tell you that Money *is* wanted and needed, including Shaw, who says, "Thank God we hired that guy." ■

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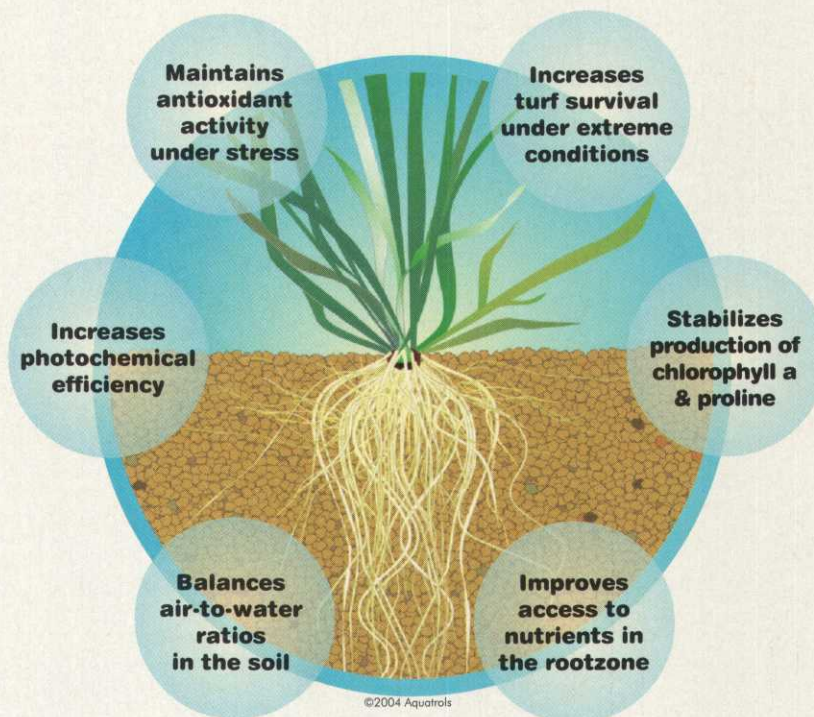
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