

Woehrle Returns to Tripoli

By Tom Schwab

Jim Belfield was the gracious host of the October 1 meeting of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association at Tripoli Country Club. It was a sunny day with a temperature in the mid-60s and just breezy enough to challenge everyone's golf game.

Enough cannot be said about the excellent condition of the golf course. The greens drew the most attention from the 72 golfers in attendance — they were nearly perfect. The rest of the golf course was in equally fine condition and was a great start to the rest of the meeting.

A delicious prime rib dinner preceded our special guest speaker for the evening, Mr. Ted Woehrle of Oakland Hills Country Club. Ted has been the golf course superintendent at Oakland Hills in Birmingham, Michigan for the last 23 years.

Nicknamed "The Monster" by the great Ben Hogan, Oakland Hills is one of the world's greatest golf courses. It is frequently referred to as America's toughest golf course.

Ted Woehrle is the third golf course superintendent in the history of OHCC. The course, designed by Donald Ross, was built in 1917.

In 1950, Robert Trent Jones was hired to update Oakland Hills. His work included narrowing fairways, relocating fairway bunkers and adding greenside bunkers. When Jones was done, the golf course had 200 bunkers!

In planning for the 1961 U.S. Open, the USGA recommended "softening" OHCC and 30 of those bunkers were removed. Today, the golf course boasts a more "reasonable" 118 sand bunkers.

The course has hosted five U.S. Open tournaments — 1924, 1937, 1951, 1961 and 1985. For us, the 1985 victory was easily the most memorable since Andy North was the winner.

The USGA tournament returns to Birmingham in 1996, and much of Ted's talk dealt with preparations already underway for that event. In the fall of 1988, all new tees were built, including separate ladies' tees. Currently, Woehrle's staff is working on rebuilding the greenside bunkers. Forty years of play have resulted in excessive sand on the bunker faces. When the project is complete, the classic look of the Oakland Hills C.C. will have returned.



Three respected veterans in the world of golf turf management — Wayne Otto, Ted Woehrle and Bob Welch.

The bunker project of 1990 wasn't unusual for Ted. In his 23 years at Oakland Hills he has never gone one year without a major project.

Woehrle, a past president of the GCSAA and a 20 year veteran editor of Michigan GCSA newsletter "A Patch of Green", pointed out that this meeting wasn't his first trip to Tripoli C.C. He remembers the golf course from one of the first GMOs. It was a pleasure to have him return to Milwaukee.

The evening ended with the presentation of golf awards. The winning team in the one bestball foursome tournament was Ken Robers, Paul Rohde, Steve Blendell and Paul Feldhake. Second place went to Ed Devinger, Chad Ball, Skip Willms and John Feiner. Third place winners were Mike Kactro, Fred Kutz, Lloyd Reed and John Wilmet.

Individual flag prizes were:

- Closest to the pin on #3 — Ed Witowski
- Closest to the pin on #7 — Jim Belfield
- Closest to the pin on #14 — Skip Willms
- Longest putt on #9 — Dan Williams
- Longest drive on #1 — Ken Robers.

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