



A "Grand" Grand Opening

By **Monroe S. Miller**, *Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club*

For me, the grand opening of The Bull at Pinehurst Farms will rank near the top of the many great golf events I have attended in my career. The August 18th event offered the sort of experience you get at The Masters, The US Open, the WSGA Centennial, the GCSAA 75th anniversary celebration, visits to some of America's great golf courses, and a day with H.W. Wind. And more. Let me tell you a little about it.



Looking down and back from 9 green to 9 tee.

Since we had a major outing at our course on that Monday and because we were already losing employees to the upcoming school semester, we all pitch in to get the golf course ready - me included. I even went to the course late Sunday afternoon to get my part of the preparations done.

No matter how well Monday morning went, I was doomed to be late for the start of the grand opening activities. By 10:30 I could see we were in good shape for an 11:30 simultee and took off for home to get cleaned up.

The trip to northeastern Wisconsin gets shorter each year as more and more miles of four-lane highway are completed. It is nearly four lanes to Fond du Lac now (US 151) and construction in that town is done. Highway 23, outside of Fondy and near Sheboygan, offers miles of four lanes. The Bull is only a few miles south of 23 on Highway 32, outside of Sheboygan Falls at the corner of Highways 32 and 28. I was there in a little over two hours.

Police vehicles and uniformed officers were at the entrance, and staff from The Bull checked names on the reservation list. I also produced my invitation. Although late, I was able to park close to the clubhouse.

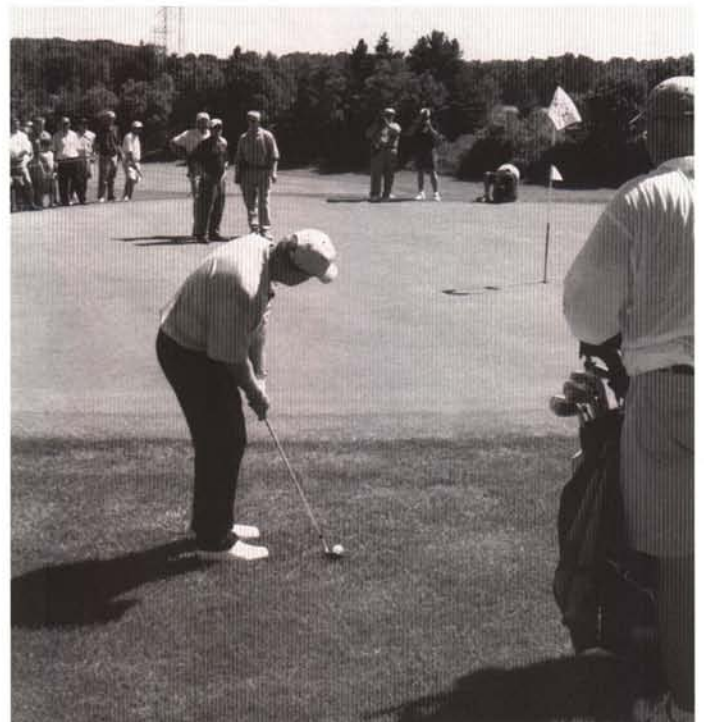
My first impression was, "WOW!" The clubhouse is on a promontory and each nine falls away dramatically from there. South of the clubhouse is what I speculate to be the farm buildings which were previously the center of operations of this property.

The owners are David Bachmann Sr. and David Bachmann Jr. They were known worldwide as

breeders of purebred Holsteins, and decided to get into the golf course business. They surely did that in first class style.

Jack Nicklaus' design firm was chosen to design the golf course, and the grand opening seemed to be his final walk through. He did that by playing an 18-hole exhibition round, from the back tees, with Tony Rzedzki, David Bachmann Jr., Nicklaus design associates Chris Cochran and Chris Rule

and golf pro David Bruce close at hand. They were in conversation with Jack most of the time. Although most of the talk was private, we were literally next to them and could hear Jack's questions and suggestions. Tony was all business and I suspect he may have enjoyed the day less than the rest of us. He was, after all, working.



Jack Nicklaus used to chip these in, but not anymore!



Jack and Tony discuss a golf course issue during the grand opening exhibition.



The grand opening at The Bull was a work day for Tony Rzadzki.



The conversation here dealt with a shade issue on the 13th green.

The course was primed for the event and Tony had it in excellent condition. Jack was wearing a microphone and talked to the audience about design, reasons for placing features where they did, and how to play the holes.

The Nicklaus firm had a premier piece of property to work with, and it covers over 400 acres. It has substantial grade changes (making it a tough course to walk), wooded areas, wetlands, fields and pastures, and even the Onion River running through it. The only distraction to me was a repeater tower and some heavy electrical transmission lines. There seemed no reason for them to move a lot of soil, given the wonderful natural topography, and apparently they did not. It is like the holes were there and they searched them out and found them.

On this day, which was really warm, the focus was on Mr. Nicklaus. I'd read that he could be a little gruff, but that wasn't the case this day. He was very friendly and outgoing and self-deprecating, recognizing he was among adoring fans who laughed at his every joke and applauded nearly every shot. He was, in every way, a regular guy.

There was a young boy who was particularly taken by Jack and followed him like a little puppy dog the whole way around the golf course. At one point, on the walk from 10 green to 11 tee, he asked Jack, "if Tiger

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was playing today, who do you think would win?"

"I would," Jack replied with all seriousness.

"But he's a lot younger than you," the lad said.

"Son, if you don't believe you can beat everybody, then you won't beat anybody." They were words of wisdom he clearly believed.

On the 18th hole, Jack hit his second shot a little right of the green onto a steep bank and into some tall grass. He chipped it up close to the pin. At that point he credited his crew, Dave Bachmann and Tony for the fine work they had done in bringing this beautiful course to fruition. He then said, "this is the way you finish the 18th on a day like this." He stood over the ball, but instead of tapping it in, he smacked it clear across the green to the boy who had followed him and talked with him all day. Then he autographed the ball.

It was a great way to end a perfect day. Jack stayed until every hat, glove, and ball was signed. He even autographed the four books I lugged to Sheboygan Falls with me.

Days like this one don't happen very often to us; I felt very fortunate to have been a part of it. The ride home was sweet. ♡



The 17th green - note the electrical transmission lines.



Mr. Nicklaus finished his round of golf on the 18th green with wonderful comments about The Bull.



L-R: Nicklaus design coordinator Chris Rule, Tony Rzadzki, golf pro David Bruce, owner David Bachmann and Nicklaus design associate Chris Cochran.



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