

Championship in 2004.

It was a gorgeous morning, warm and green following generous rain the preceding day and night. Mr. Kohler had some wonderful reminiscences of players expected to play in the tournament. I hadn't realized just how many of these great players he knew personally and had played golf with over the years. The event is open to pros and amateurs 50 and over, and that covers a lot of our greatest all-time golfers.

This tournament should be as good for golf, generally, in Wisconsin as the 1998 U.S. Women's Open at

Blackwolf Run and the 2004 PGA at Whistling Straits were. All of us benefit from that.

As we get closer to the tournament we will learn more about the passes our GCSAA card will earn. And even if we had to purchase a pass like everyone else does (heaven forbid!), it will be a delicious treat. And, who knows, maybe Jack or Arnie will decide to play one more time.

By the way, Kathy Whitworth's score on July 16th was even par. ♪



The host of hosts - Herb Kohler.



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Green Management a Little Too Close to the Edge

By Bob Vavrek, USGA Green Section Senior Agronomist, North Central Region

Doesn't it seem to be getting more difficult to maintain fast, firm, smooth playing surfaces on old creeping bentgrass/*Poa annua* greens every year? Why shouldn't it? Old greens have never been pushed so hard to meet the often unreasonable expectations and demands of golfers who are never quite satisfied for long regardless of how fast and firm the greens may be. If they are not fast enough, then make them faster. If they are fast enough, that's fine, but then be sure to maintain that speed from the day the course opens until the snow flies. I'm not sure what fuels the need for speed, but just watch the smug satisfaction on the face of the member who watches his guest four putt that attempt at a birdie or, better yet, blow that short downhill putt right back into the approach. Yep...these greens are finally putting just about right.

Remember the "good old days" of turf management circa 10 or 15 years ago? You didn't have to be recovering from severe winterkill to mow greens above 1/8". There really wasn't any need to talk in the language of 1000ths.

You were either at 1/8" or 9/64" for a few days or a week before a special event or else you were mowing around 5/32" for day to day play. It wasn't unheard of to raise the height of cut to 3/16" after the middle of September just to give the turf time to recover and store carbohydrates before winter.

The grass on the old greens hasn't changed much over the past 15 years or so, and if it has, it's only become worse. Low mowing heights, more water, and more fungicides have more than likely increased the percentage of *Poa annua*; unless of course, you have deluded yourself into thinking that throwing some A-4 or Providence into the cultivation holes once or twice during your career has magically transformed the old Washington bentgrass into a spanking brand new kind of turf. Then again I'm assuming there are still holes in the greens and golfers haven't badgered you into substituting deep tine and quadratine aeration for the time-tested practice of removing 1/2" to 5/8" cores from the putting surfaces twice a season.



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Are the losses of turf on old greens that occur with more regularity these days just unavoidable side effects of global warming, or are we pushing the greens to the point where it takes very little additional stress to cause extensive injury. I don't recall discussing treatments for fairy rings, take-all patch, basal rot anthracnose, nematodes, annual winterkill events and annual midsummer heat stress injury all that much, if at all, in my initial Turf Advisory Service visit reports of the early 90's. Perhaps these problems were there all along, but misdiagnosed, but I don't think so.

I believe we are simply pushing old greens too far...heights of cut at or below 1/10" from early in spring until a week or so before snow mold fungicides are applied, double cutting and/or rolling 5 - 7 times a week, and sole reliance on a starvation diet of liquid fertilizer. A Scott's spinner spreader of sand once in a while and perhaps a mid-March deep tine operation can be done to manage thatch as long as it doesn't interfere with play.

Unorthodox use of plant growth regulators and herbicides are an issue as well. First, there's three applications of Primo/Proxy just to take care of the seedheads, then I'll kick the *Poa* in the butt with a shot of Trimmit just before it gets hot, now that it's been threatened, my Primo/Cutless treatment will confuse the *Poa* to the point

where my "experimental" application of Velocity (made when no one's looking) can finally clean it out of the greens. Funny how the final result looks very much like the severe winterkill that occurred last year and kept you awake at night all spring wondering if you would keep your job. Fortunately, I was exaggerating wildly...or was I?

The greens are that old pick up that still gets you to and from work and can even manage high speed for short trips once in a while. Take that truck on a sustained high speed cross country trip and it will certainly break down. Skip the oil changes (regular top-dressing and hollow tine cultivation) and the breakdowns will be worse and occur sooner.

Is there an answer? Well, it's not likely that golfers are going to become more reasonable any time soon. One option that needs to be considered is regrassing the greens with an improved cultivar of bentgrass. This has been accomplished with good success at nearly 20 courses in the Chicago area, yet not one course in Detroit, Minneapolis-St. Paul, or Milwaukee has attempted to fumigate and regrass the putting surfaces. It will only take one or two regrassing success stories in any of these cities to become an acceptable alternative to managing old greens. How, When, How Much? Good questions and perhaps a good topic for a future Grass Roots article. ♣



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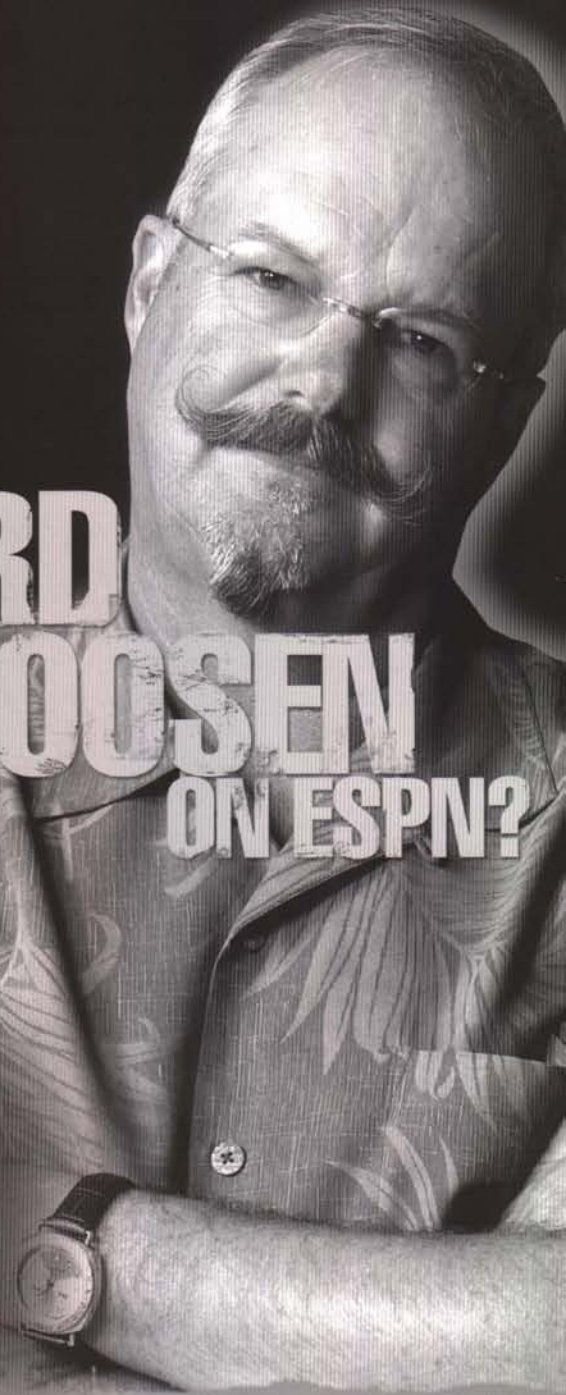
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A Visit to the South China Sea

By Tom Emmerich, TJE Irrigation Consultant

On April 23rd as with most workday mornings, I was sipping my first cup of coffee and downloading the morning's Email. The first message to appear was from Randy Witt, formally the golf course superintendent at Oneida Golf and Riding Club and most recently The Bull at Pinehurst Farm. The message read as follows:

"How's everything in WI? Hope all is well with you. I would assume that by now you have heard that I'm in Hong Kong. I'm Superintendent of the courses at Hong Kong Golf Club. We have 3 courses here. The oldest course is presently undergoing a renovation with redesign and regrassing of all fairways, some greens, some tees, and bunkers. The irrigation system is also being replaced. We are to the point where construction should be completed within the next 30 days.

Would you be interested in coming over to rebuild the hydraulic tree for the system that serves the three courses? The system is a hydraulic Toro with Site Pro/ OSMAC and supplied by a Flowtronics pump station. You would need to come over here for as long as it would take you to put it all together. If you would be interested, e-mail me back and I can give you a call to discuss it."

I thought wow! What an opportunity. I wrote back that I was very interested in doing the work, but with current business and family obligations, could not make the trip until mid-June at the earliest. Randy mailed back that my time frame was acceptable and to bring my wife Barb along. So, after writing some



HKGC Clubhouse, looking back from #1 Eden Tee.



Mechanical raking of the bunker (done once a week).

proposals and scrambling to get passports, the trip was on.

On Saturday, June 17th, we caught a 6:55AM Coach USA bus in Waukesha. After several stops along the way, we were dropped off at the United Airlines Terminal, O'Hare International Airport for a 12:23 PM direct flight to Hong Kong. The flight lasted 15 hours and we arrived at 4:50 PM Sunday afternoon Hong Kong time (3:50 AM central time). We were met at

the airport by Randy and Chip Lewison, the other golf course superintendent at Hong Kong Golf Club, and Chip's friend Debbie Sime.

From the airport, it was about a 35 minute drive to Hong Kong Golf Club. The general area of Hong Kong consists of four districts. These are the island of Hong Kong, Kowloon, the New Territories and the outlying islands. Hong Kong Golf Club is located in the village

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of Sheung Shui at the north end of the New Territories. From the 5th tee on the Eden Course you can see the Village of Shenzhen which is located in Red China.

The membership at Hong Kong Golf Club numbers 2,500 people from throughout Asia and the United Kingdom. To accommodate their travel needs, the clubhouse has a hotel that is used by members and their guests. It was in one of these rooms that Barb and I stayed. We also were provided with meals in the clubhouse dining room.

According to the club's website, (hkgolfclub.org), "The Royal Hong Kong Golf Club was founded in May of 1889 by thirteen golfing enthusiasts. They played on an open area in Happy Valley that was also used for football, polo, hockey and military parades. Due to the other uses, they were not allowed to construct bunkers, greens or tees."

"As membership grew along with pressure on tee times, the Captain and club officials were forced to find another location. They found Deep Water Bay, which is located on the Island of Hong Kong. Here they constructed a nine hole course."

"Between 1906 and 1910 protracted negotiations took place between the club and local farmers to secure sufficient land in Fanling to build a full 18 holes. The Old course was laid out by the end of 1911 and additional land was acquired in the late 1920's for the New Course which opened for play in 1931."

"The end of World War II saw the club virtually bankrupt with the courses at Fanling and Deep Water Bay in very poor condition. With strong support from the members and local companies, conditions gradually improved to the extent that a third course, The Eden, was added in 1970."

Beside the golf courses, the club includes a swimming pool, tennis courts, gymnasium and the equestrian club. In fact, Hong Kong Golf



View from Victoria Peak, Hong Kong in foreground, Victoria Harbor and Kowloon in the background.



Grounds maintenance building.



Tom and Barb Emmerich on Victoria Peak.

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#6 Eden Course.

Club will host the cross country equestrian events for the 2008 Olympics. The courses for these events including the jumps are currently under construction.

In Hong Kong, the months of May through August are the rainy season. While we were there, the temperatures ranged from 90 to 104 degrees F. with 80 to 90% humidity. It rained four of the six days. Many of the members leave Hong Kong and return to the United Kingdom during these months. They return for the months of September through April. These months comprise the prime golf season in Hong Kong.

Given the tropical location of Hong Kong Golf Club, the golf courses are grassed with warm season cultivars. The greens are bermuda and the fairways are passpalum. The tees are either zoysia or passpalum and the rough is carpet grass. The tees and greens are walk mowed. The fairways and rough are mowed with riding reel mowers. The bunkers are groomed with sand pro once a week. The rest of the time they are raked by hand.

The Club employs about 100 people for maintenance of the golf course and the club grounds.

The ground maintenance department is organized with two golf course superintendents. Chip Lewison handles all administration and interfaces with the Club Manager, the Captain and club officials. Chip has three administrative assistants to handle paperwork and materials disbursement.

Randy reports directly to Chip and handles the day to day operations of the grounds maintenance department. Each golf course has a 1st and 2nd assistant superintendent and thirteen laborers. Besides the three golf course crews, there is a shop crew consisting of the chief mechanic, an assistant and ten laborers; a fourteen person projects crew; a landscape crew to maintain all of the gardens and run the nursery operation and a six arborist crew. There are



Golf hole on the new course.



Carpet grass sod.

also two technicians to handle day to day maintenance and repairs on the irrigation system.

About 40% of the grounds maintenance employees are women and all of the caddies are women. They used pull carts to transport the golfer's bag rather than carrying it over the shoulder as we do here. Despite the high temperature and humidity, all of the caddies and the women on golf maintenance crew wore clothing to avoid exposure to the sun. This included long pants, long sleeve tops, wide brim hats and gloves.

Randy explained that in the Chinese culture a tan on a woman is considered unattractive. All of the golfers carried umbrellas to shield themselves from the sun. The umbrella was handed to the caddy at each shot and then returned for the walk down the fairway.

The programming of the new fairway irrigation and rework of the hydraulic tree for all three courses took about four and one half days to complete. During that time, my wife Barb and Deb had a wonderful time exploring the shopping offered in the New Territories.

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Ladies laying carpet grass sod. I was reminded of a quilting bee.



The Red China / Hong Kong Border.

On Thursday afternoon we took the commuter train into Kowloon and boarded the Star Ferry for a seven minute trip to Hong Kong Island. Once on the island, we went to Victoria Peak to see the wonderful view of Victoria Harbor and Kowloon. We then returned to Kowloon to meet Randy, Chip and Deb in a Packer bar and restaurant that Randy found in the Miramar Hotel. We were greatly disappointed to find it closed for renovation. We made other arrangements for dinner but not until we caught happy hour in the hotel bar.

The highlight of our trip was a one day excursion into Red China to visit the city of Guangzhou. Through a local travel agent, Chip was able to secure single day visas

for himself, Deb, Barb and me to enter Red China. Escorted by Li Tao, the 1st assistant for the Old Course and a Guangzhou native, we went through immigration and customs at Kowloon Tong and boarded a train for a 90 minute ride to the northeast. Guangzhou has a total population of 7.5 million. That is two million more people than live in the entire state of Wisconsin. Arriving in Guangzhou, we left the train, cleared immigration and boarded the subway to a shopping district where we met up with Li's wife Yang Li. We spent the day browsing the many shops and experienced a traditional Chinese meal for lunch.

On the return trip we got off the train at Shenzhen, a Chinese city on

the border with the New Territories. Here we did more shopping and walked across the border back into the New Territories. We went through Chinese immigration and customs, walked over the border and then had to clear Hong Kong immigration and customs. This was all done in the confines of one building.

For me the most sobering part of that experience was the walk across the boarder. The border consists of a concrete moat about 50 yards wide. On each side of the moat was a 10-

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