



*Resodding the 15th hole*

**FOR CHRIS HAGUE AND STAFF**

# ***There's a Lot Going on at Hazeltine Inside AND Outside the Gallery Ropes***

**BY RALPH TURTINEN**

Preparing a golf course for a major championship like the 1991 U.S. Open and coping with all the related responsibilities that go with it is nothing new for Chris Hague, 38-year-old golf course superintendent at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska.

Next year's Open, to be held June 13-16, will be his third national USGA championship, but this classic, of course, is THE tournament most any superintendent would like to have on his own course.

Previously he was the man in charge of the grounds at Eagle Creek Golf Club in Indianapolis, Ind., site of the 1982 USGA Men's Public Links Championship, and the following year, his first at Hazeltine, he directed all the preparations for the U.S. Senior Open at the Chaska course.

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**“Obviously, there's a lot to do inside the gallery ropes** for a major championship like the Open,” Hague said, “but most people probably don't realize the staggering scope of activities outside of the ropes.”

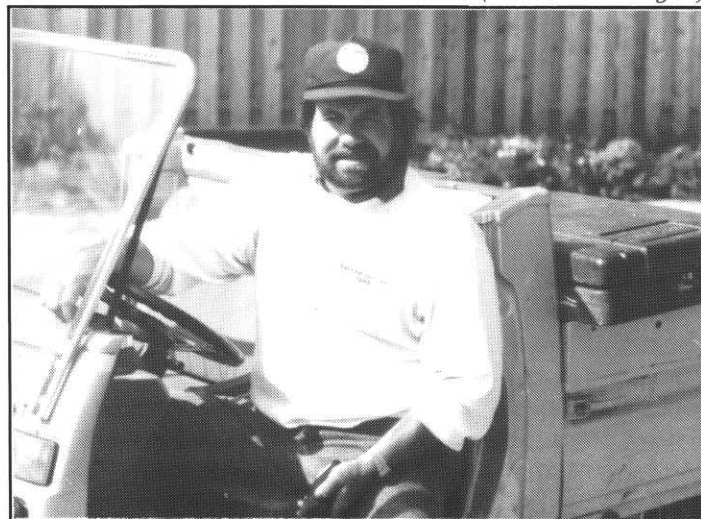
However, if there's one superintendent who can get the job done right, it's Chris Hague, who is known by his peers as a “superintendents' superintendent” and is held in high esteem for his highly-organized approach to his responsibilities.

Chris has been working golf courses ever since he was a lad

of 13 in Pittsboro, Ind., where he was born a day after Christmas in 1951 and was graduated from high school in 1969.

**He enrolled in the School of Agronomy and Turf Management** at Purdue University's Extension in Indianapolis, but a draft call cut his educational plans short. He wound

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**CHRIS HAGUE**  
*Hazeltine Superintendent*

## Corporate Village Being Developed On 22-Acre Site

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up in the U.S. Army for two years of which 10 months were served in Vietnam.

After his discharge he became an assistant superintendent at Plainfield Elks Club in Plainfield, Ind., then was named head superintendent at the somewhat tender age of 22 at Eagle Creek, a 27-hole municipal course designed by Pete Dye. Chris came aboard half-way through construction and remained as head superintendent through the 1982 public links championship.

About one month later, the Hazeltine position opened up, he applied, was interviewed and, 30 days later in September, 1982, he was on the job in Chaska and immediately began preparing for the '83 Senior Open.

"Naturally this experience has been most beneficial for next year's tournament," Hague said. But this time, because it is THE Open, there's a lot more to do than just making certain the course is attractive and as playable as possible.

\* \* \* \*

**It's no secret that Hazeltine wanted another U.S. Open,** which was held there in 1970. Having made considerable changes following the infamous remarks of Dave Hill, club officials later responded to rather ardent requests by the USGA to change the contours of 13 greens—some major, some subtle; revitalize Hazeltine's practice area; completely rebuild or revise tee boxes that affect 13 holes and, under the guidance of Rees Jones, redevelop greenside and fairway bunkers on Holes 1, 2, 3, 7, 11 and 18.

Since 1986, when the Chaska club was awarded the '91 Open, Hague and his staff have been putting in long hours on a variety of tasks, all geared to be as prepared as possible when the first practice shot is hit next June and the hordes of spectators invade Hazeltine.

For example, there's a "corporate village" being developed on 22 acres to house 40 corporate hospitality tents. This all-new, blue grass area, with several sections involving bent grass for exhibitions, has required considerable earthmoving. Flat pad sites were carved out of hills, and specific areas, 45 feet by 75 feet, had to be leveled to accommodate floor joists, plywood flooring and indoor-outdoor carpeting for the tents. A temporary irrigation system also has been installed.

"Now that this area is getting mature, we have a full-time person in charge," Hague said. "It's like maintaining a 20-acre golf course."

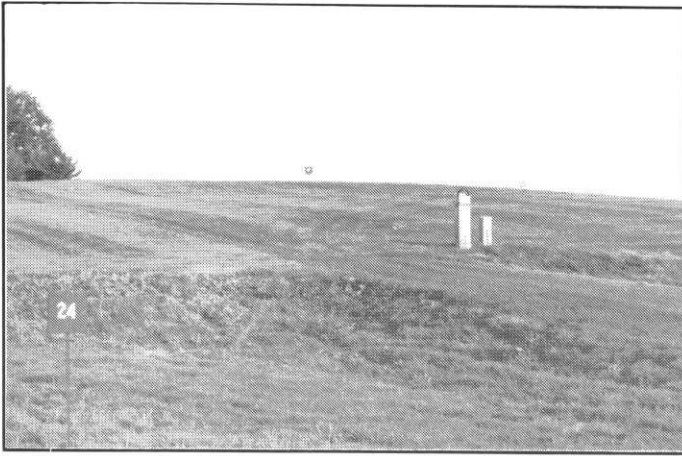
In addition, Chris has to supervise the installation of scoring circuits, bleacher sites, leader boards, throughboard sites, the placement of merchandise tenting and concession tents as well as develop spaces for trailers.

Then there are the telephone lines and electrical lines, the access to utilities, gravel roads for parking areas as well as preparing the admission area.

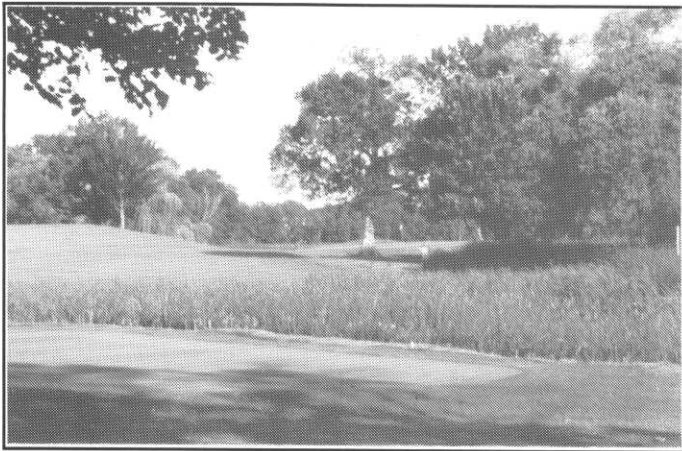
**Coming, too, is all the preparatory work for ABC-TV,** including scaffolds, camera viewing positions, tree trimming, boom trucks and electrical power sources.

"It's like setting up a small city," Hague said. "Next year we'll have about 30 tractor trailers and six satellite dishes on site."

All of these "extras" funnel through the course superinten-



The 'Corporate Village'



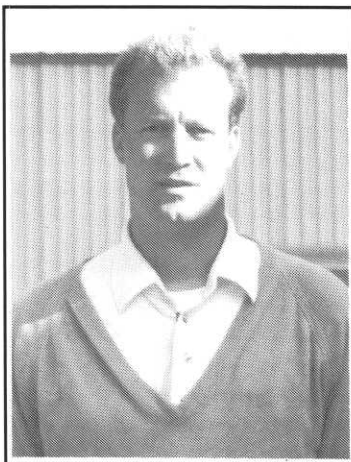
Hazeltine's 16th hole



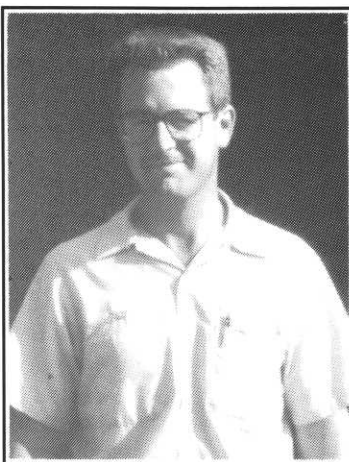
Laying cable and power lines to the Corporate Village



Hazeltine's 8th hole



**DAVE DEEMS**  
*Assistant Superintendent*



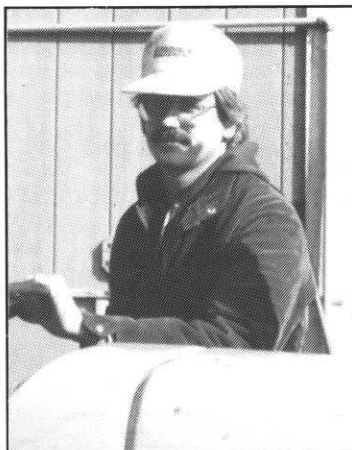
**SCOTT SCHUNTER**  
*Golf Course Foreman*



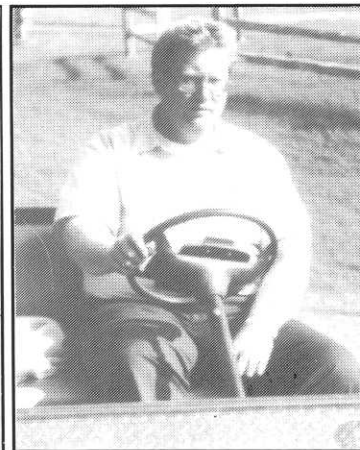
*Preparing fairway on third hole for resodding*



*Resodding*



**RALPH ARNT**  
*Equipment Manager*



**JOHN BETCHWARS**  
*The Cup Cutter*

PHOTOS BY SCOTT TURTINEN

## **Stimpmeter Will Be At 11.5 When 1991 U.S. Open Begins**

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dent, in this case Chris Hague, who also has plenty to do with preparing the golf course.

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"Obviously the course has to be in playable condition," he said. "This work isn't much different than it usually is, except we nit-pick more. . . a lot more."

"For example, we repair small dips in the fairway or small holes in the rough," he said. "A tree may have been decaying for 20 years, and a sink hole results. We're much more fastidious about everything. We comb the course to find little flaws, then repair them."

The green program also isn't much different from normal maintenance.

"We've been having the stimpmeter at 9-9.5 for normal play and make it 10-10.5 for some special events, but for the Open it will be 11.5."

\* \* \* \*

**Hague's normal staff numbers 20-21, but he now has 29 on time cards.** In addition to one person specifically responsible for the corporate village, he has six persons on what he

calls his "sodbuster staff" plus a golf course foreman for this crew. Primarily the sodbusters are re-sodding, leveling improper humps, installing drain tile and handling a miscellany of other chores.

Next spring, Chris will beef up his staff "to do all that needs to be done." He expects to peak around 40 persons.

**Of major help** to the Hazeltine superintendent in all of these preparatory responsibilities are Dave Deem, first assistant golf course superintendent; Scott Schunter, golf course foreman, and Ralph Arnt, equipment manager.

Deem's primary duties are within the gallery ropes. He devotes considerable attention to greens, tees, fairways and bunkers as well as the corporate village and is responsible for training non-skilled persons.

Schunter focuses on work outside of the ropes, such as primary roughs, intermediate roughs, ponds and pond banks.

Arnt, like Deem and Schunter, has much more to do than in a normal year. Since his area of expertise requires more staff and more equipment than usual, his responsibilities in maintenance and upkeep have increased with his inventory. Currently he's responsible for approximately \$800,000 worth of equipment.

"Naturally, during the golf season, there are a lot of long hours and a lot of hard work," he said, "but, most of the time, we're enjoying this opportunity. The Open gives our entire staff and myself the chance to see what we can do. We'll be in the limelight, and that's a big incentive for all of us. So far every-

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# Unknown Elements Cause the Most Stress

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one who's here now plans to come back next spring, so we'll be relatively experienced."

\* \* \* \*

Perhaps the most stressful parts of Hague's duties deal with unknown elements, things that he can't control like the 13 inches of rain in a 40-day period this spring, or the problems associated with the "bad winter" of 1989-90.

"The logistics of having our course at its peak when the tournament begins is a major challenge," he said, "as it is for preparing for any eventualities, like what type and how many auxiliary pumps are needed just in case it rains during the tournament like it did this Spring, or how many thousands of yards of wood chips would be required to place on fabric liners to alleviate major traffic problems in case of a deluge."

"If it did pour," Hague said, "we'd need increased wrecker service for the parking area. We could lose 20-25% of the 200 acres set aside for parking, and we also would have to develop a shuttle service."

\* \* \* \*

Communicating with all the people who want to talk with Chris also poses a problem. Some, of course, are important. A big help in this regard is Paula Buetow, who used to work on the grounds crew but now serves as Chris' administrative

assistant. Along with pursuing considerable and necessary paperwork, she's in position to screen calls, to contact Chris when it's important and to politely ask people to call back or wait for Chris to call if it's not something that needs immediate attention.

Chris has a cellular telephone with him on the course, so that he can respond as promptly as possible.

\* \* \* \*

Meantime, what effect does all this have on Chris' personal life? He may love his golf course, but he also loves his family, which includes his wife, Sharon, and their two daughters, Stephanie, 16, and Stacy, 13.

"Obviously, this type of work, particularly with the Open, makes personal planning difficult," Hague said. "But some times the time is right to get somewhere, at least for a while."

"Fortunately, Sharon is a very understanding wife," Chris said. "She comes from a farm family and knows what a proper work ethic is all about. So do our daughters. They all know that for six to seven months a year it's a busy time for golf course superintendents, but we can settle back a bit in December, January and February."

A little winter respite will be important. When the snow melts next Spring, say in April, the following two months certainly will test the mettle of Chris Hague and his crew.

But, like his professional colleagues say: he's so well-organized. He and his staff will get the job done right.

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