



Par five 18th hole provides spectacular finish at Grand View's new course

FOR SUPERINTENDENT TOM KIENTZLE

Building 'The Pines' Was Like Going to the Super Bowl

For course superintendent Tom Kientzle, being involved from Day One in the construction of The Pines—the attractive, new, 18-hole championship golf course at Grand View Lodge north of Brainerd—was like getting an opportunity to play in the Super Bowl.

Sure, there were hundreds of days of dawn-to-dusk labor, and certainly there were times when he rather would have been basking in a boat on nearby Gull Lake rather than slashing his way through dense woods.

But Tom simply couldn't have been happier when, in 1987, Grand View owners made the go-ahead decision to build the course, destined to become one of Minnesota's finest golf facilities.

"I knew that construction would entail 12 to 14-hour days seven days a week for at least six months a year for two years," Kientzle said, "but every golf course superintendent dreams about the opportunity to be involved right from the start in the building of a new course, especially one with the beauty and stature of The Pines.

From a professional standpoint, he said, it truly was a "rewarding experience."

Now in his sixth season at Grand View, Tom joined Grand View's staff following his graduation from Anoka Technical College in 1985. A native of Chicago, he first became involved in golf course operations when his father, Thomas G., purchased Birch Bay Golf Course & Resort, located about five miles from Grand View.

His initial responsibilities were to take care of Grand View's Garden Course, a 2,500-yard, nine-hole layout that was built in 1954, then remodeled in 1964 and again in 1969. To accomplish this task, he had four seasonal employees.

Now, to keep on top of "the challenge of The Pines," and to continue the necessary maintenance of the Garden Course, he has a full-time assistant, Kevin Rue; a full-time mechanic, Mike Kyar, and 17 additional staffpersons.

Kientzle worked closely with architect Joel Goldstrand right from the start. From aerial views of the 340-acre site set aside for The Pines, Goldstrand had made the preliminary layout of the 18 holes.

Survey stakes were set on centerlines, indeed a tough and time-consuming job that required cutting a path through the dense forest where one often couldn't see more than 20 feet ahead.

"We would ribbon the perimeters of the fairways, working off the center line using the architect's dimensions," Kientzle said. "After the tree cutters would drop trees inside the ribbons, we would observe the fairways, green surrounds and tee areas, then ribbon perimeter trees two more times to get the right width and save trees."

"After we tied ribbons on the trees we wanted to save, the tree cutters came in and made another lane," Kientzle said. "Naturally we wanted to save all key specimen trees, and we protected many of the perimeter trees like white pine, Norways and maples.

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Immense practice range has tees at both ends



CLEARING AND GRUBBING a year ago on the fifth hole.



Superintendent Tom Kientzle

Roughs Seeded and Trimmed 30-40 Feet on Each Side of Fairways

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By June 15, 1989, most of the clearing and grubbing had been accomplished, and Ron Bloom, president of Fairway Architects, Inc., began directing the movement of dirt to shape the course according to Goldstrand's design.

"We grubbed out about 40 acres with the contractor's dozers and my crew working with axes and brush rakes," Kientzle said, "Obviously, it was a lot of tough work, taking about five months to complete."

Day-by-day, Kientzle said, it didn't seem as though much was being accomplished, "but, by August 1, we began getting an excellent perception of what the course would look like, and we gained a lot of satisfaction as well as pride over what we had accomplished. Reaching this point spurs one on to keep plugging away towards completion."

During the principal two years of construction and early this spring, excellent weather prevailed.

"Because of the drought years of 1988 and 1989, we got a lot more accomplished than we anticipated," he said. "There were a few rainfalls that set us back a bit, particularly when we had about one inch of water in an hour this spring. Periodically, we had to do some re-seeding, and this year we had to bring in some additional sod, but, overall, the weather was much more plus than minus."

All the seeding of the rough had been completed by July, and all the greens were seeded by September, 1989.

"We had very little winter kill, and 13 greens came through exceptionally well," Kientzle said. "But we were able to take care of the other five this spring. It is remarkable to look at the greens. They look a lot more mature than one year."

Because of the dense woods and Grand View's desire to keep play moving, roughs have been trimmed and seeded 30-40 feet on each side of the fairways.

Rather than rush into an early 1990 opening, Grand View management chose to wait until July to open nine holes (the back nine), so that it would present a desirable appearance right from the start, and to give Kientzle and his crew the proper time to plan and prepare for course maintenance.

"I set a personal goal of having everything ready by June 15," Kientzle said. "Then we could begin developing our mow-

ing patterns and develop the correct coordination of mowing fairways, intermediate rough, the rough and greens. This is so necessary to get the job done efficiently."

He also has a similar July 15 target for the anticipated August 1 opening of the full course.

Does Tom have advice for other course superintendents who get involved in new course construction?

"First of all, make the most of this opportunity, often a once-in-a-lifetime situation," he said. "Then establish excellent communication with the architect and contractor, and obviously with the owner.

"Be patient, because very little is accomplished overnight.

"Be careful, because accidents can happen. We almost lost two men, one when a five-wheeler ran into the back of a D-8 dozer, and another when a tree was dropped on a power line.

"Have an excellent crew that knows full well the job ahead. I really had excellent men, who took a lot of pride in what they did!"

"And have a very understanding wife. My wife, Joyce, was most supportive." (They met when she was working on Grand View's extensive flower program and are the parents of two children.)

And now that the construction aspect of the course is virtually done, what do you think of it?

"Naturally, I'm somewhat biased," Kientzle said, "but I honestly can say there isn't a bad hole on the course. Particularly appealing to me are 12, 15, 16 and 18, but every hole stands on its own."

Is it a tough course?

"From the back tees, which play to 6,832 yards, it's as tough as any course in the state," Kientzle said. "But with our multiple tee arrangement, it can be interesting and challenging for golfers of any handicap.

"In addition, with the variety of trees like birch, oak, maple, Norway pines, jack pines and poplar, and with four holes having water come into play, it's really a thing of beauty. Furthermore, along the way you may see some deer walking on the fairway or some beavers and ducks in the pond on 12. Golfing here can be a very pleasing experience."