

# NEW GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION EVALUATION

By Paul Mayes  
The Links at Northfork

Recently I was involved with construction of a new golf course — The Links at Northfork. It has always been one of my goals to build a golf course from the beginning to end. I had enough experience with reconstruction and upgrading of older courses and I felt it was time to build a course correctly from scratch.

Since this was my first involvement with totally new construction, there are some areas I would do differently and some areas I would do exactly the same, if I ever do such a project again.

I was involved with this project since its conception approximately five years ago. My role was to be the liaison between the management company, contractor and golf course architect. I was given the opportunity to set standards for construction quality and management style. My daily tasks were recommending field adjustments for agronomic stability and easier maintenance. I also assisted the construction foremen in all phases of the project.

**One of the most important items** I would do differently is being more involved in the initial specifications for construction of the golf course. This would eliminate any grey areas which the contractor is responsible for. It would also enable the contractor to research materials needed well in advance of the project.

The next most important area I would do differently is creating better surface drainage in large flat areas. This would be solved in one of two ways: either by raising the percentage

of surface slope from one percent to at least two percent, or, creating drainage swales in these areas to move the water to non-play areas for infiltration into the soil. We are presently solving the problems with French drains and tile lines.

In conjunction with drainage, I would also tile ALL bunkers and use surface drains in grass depressions. Because of our high sand soil profile, we did very little subsurface drainage in these areas. For the most part these areas drain very well. But under extreme heavy rain conditions, I would like to see more expedient subsurface removal of water in these areas.

Another aspect of the project which I would do differently is sodding of green complexes. We sodded one strip around our greens, tees and bunkers. We also did some severe slopes. Because of the multiple mounding and depressions, I feel the majority of the green complex should be sodded. This would eliminate most washout repairs and continued reseeding.

**Our pond banks are also an area I would change** their construction. We sodded around most of our ponds, but because of the amount of surface drainage to the ponds, washouts were a big problem. The most severe washout areas were ripped. I feel that all pond banks should be ripped or stabilized with some type of permanent material.

I would also complete the construction of the maintenance building much earlier in the project. We did not have adequate

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# Northfork Construction—

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storage facilities for equipment in later stages of construction. It was difficult to run the total operation out of a trailer. Meetings and crew organization were difficult to manage without proper facilities.

Last, but not least, staffing is another area I would change. Other than bringing some labor type people on board during construction, I supervised the total seeding, fertilizing and grow in of the golf course myself, as well as working with the construction foremen in completion of the project. I would definitely hire an assistant to oversee maintenance of the grow in of the golf course. And if possible, a foreman to assist that person.

There are some areas of the project I would do exactly the same. We had very good success in certain aspects of construction techniques which I wish to share with you.

**Green construction is one of the most important** parts of the golf course. We followed U.S.G.A. recommendations in our green construction except for one item. We did not use a barrier between the green's material and the surrounding soil profile. The reason for no barrier was because the surrounding soil profile was similar to the root zone mix. We felt the interface of the two profiles would not create a problem such as localized dry spots or added disease pressure. If the surrounding profile was of heavier soils, we would have used a barrier.

Tee construction is another area I would do the same. Because tees are almost as important as greens, we used the same root zone mix as on greens for the top six inches on tees. Also, our subgrade soil profile consisted of high sand material.

Method of seeding is also a procedure I would do similarly. The soil surface must be well pulverized for good soil to seed

contact. We used billion seeders on the fairways and rough. Fairways were seeded with Penncross bentgrass at 65 lbs. per acre. The greens and tees were seeded with Pennlinks and Penn-cross bentgrass respectfully at 1½ lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. with a drop spreader. I used Milorganite as a carrier for the bentgrass seed. When seeding greens and tees, we first raked the surface, seeded in two directions, reraked, then drove over the surface with the wheels of a mechanical bunker rake unit to get soil to seed contact.

### Timing of seeding is as important as the seed itself.

The perfect window for seeding I believe is from June 15th to August 15th. Soil temperatures are at their maximum for fast germination. We had bentgrass germinating in three days (this was not pregerminated seed).

Fertilizing procedures are also an area I would do the same. We applied 10 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. of 20-10-20 to all areas just before initial seeding. The material used was 50 percent sulfur-coated. Three weeks later, we applied 2½ lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. per week of 20-6-20 quick release material until the end of the growing season. All fertilizers used were an Ag grade material. There was some modeling of the surface color, but we were not concerned with that during the grow in period. We will continue with a high fertility program during the 1992 season.

I hope some of my evaluations will assist you if you are considering construction or reconstruction of an area on your golf course. Maybe not every procedure we used will work for you in your situation, but if it does help you to make a decision on your project, I feel you will be pleased with the results. Golf course construction is an exciting challenge which is very rewarding when you see the outcome. I feel you never stop improving your golf course, no matter how perfect it is from the beginning.



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