

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Former Minnesotan Don Lindblad Builds Course in 'Paradise'

By Jack Kolb

Have you ever visited one of those exotic places that are referred to as Paradise? I'm sure that everyone (in a fantasy dream) would leap at the chance to build a golf course on an exotic island in the South Seas or the Caribbean. Well, they do seem like Utopia until you get into so-called "outback" or the areas of the island that have not been cultivated, groomed or manicured to the nature of our culture.

After spending a certain amount of time in the "wilds" of Hawaii, especially the island of Maui, and knowing the nature of the basic quality of the *terra firma*, I thought it would be interesting to learn how these problems are overcome. I knew Don Lindblad was in the area building a new course for the Makena Resort people and decided to learn first hand from some one who has done a number of these kinds of construction while working for and with Robert Trent Jones, Jr.

Don Lindblad is another of the many Golf Course Superintendents who came out of the Willmar area under the influence of Harold Dale, at that time Superintendent of what was then called Willmar Country Club. Fresh out of high school, Don came to the Twin Cities to seek his fortune and ply his trade as a journeyman in the turf industry. I did not get all the specifics from him, but I know Don worked for Dick McLaughlin at Wayzata Country Club and eventually for me at The Minikahda Club. Don probably had more experiences working for other clubs, but eventually he was chosen by Chuck Maddox to be the foreman in the construction of Majestic Oaks Golf Club. He stayed on to become the Superintendent for several years after construction.

Since Don completed Makena Resort Golf Club, he has moved on to Aruba, a small Caribbean island that is virtually on the Tropic of Cancer (the sun is directly overhead). Conditions on Aruba are quite different than Hawaii. Aruba is a rather flat, dry and sandy little island where the wind is constant from one direction and with such velocity, that the only tree that can withstand the distortions of perpetual bending and nodding is the *Divi Divi*.

So what did Don Lindblad teach me about building a golf course in an area that has virtually no sand, soil or gravel as we see the mantle of cover here in Minnesota? In fact one of the reasons for the lack of soil formation is the meager rainfall in this particular area of Maui. Although it is an island of somewhat small proportions, the rainfall varies from 10 inches in certain areas to over 200 inches. I'm not going to refer to the base material in Hawaii as soil but rather *terra firma* consisting of volcanic rock, ash and magma. A bulldozer would be virtually ineffective in shaping any of the "Parent Material" for construction.

So how did Donovan Lindblad get such beautiful artistry out of this "moonscape"? The solution is quite simple if you have a lot of money backing the project such as a Mr. Tutsumi. You simply locate a large cinder cone nearby



DONOVAN LINDBLAD at the edge of the fairway with cactus, Alalia trees and hezau in background.

and you overdress all the rock and undesirable magma with a layer of fine cinder. The cinder layer varies in thickness from a few inches to several feet or whatever pleases the architect.

The construction of the Makena course was done by hauling in cinder from a cone five miles up the slope of Haleakala Crater with several 32-yard, Model 769 Caterpillar trucks. The cinders were screened for the final coat so that the largest size particles were $\frac{3}{8}$ inch and included all fines under that size. Shaping and working with the cinder coat was extremely simple with gentle rolling contours, where at one time there was raw lava slag. The material reacted like and was similar to a mixed grade of Turface. Turface, as you know, has a base exchange as opposed to sand which has none. From what I could observe of the growth on this material, it had base exchange and whatever else it took to support growth because the speed with which Don could establish turf was phenomenal.

Establishment of the fairways was done vegetatively. Stolon were extracted from a four-acre nursery comprised of No. 419 Tifton Bermuda. This four-acre nursery was inadequate in size to keep up with the planting, and Don would have to hold up on stolon collections to give the nursery a two-week respite so it could re-establish itself. He raided some of the earlier planted fairways to collect enough stolons to keep the operation on track.

Although Hawaii does not appear to have seasons (from the standpoint of temperature variations), Don felt that the growth at the time I was there (late November) was not as good as it had been earlier in the year. If this were so, the difference in growth rate could have been laid to length of daylight. The establishment of turf on this sterile cinder material was phenomenal. Don would spread the stolons and, as soon as they were laid, he turned on the irrigation. Fertilization did not take place until one week after planting and the fairway was completely established at the end of two weeks.

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Lindblad —

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Greens were planted similarly except the foundation or "soil" under the green was a mixture of true sand, 80 percent, and peat 20 percent. Greens, of course, had a finer Bermuda and they were planted with "Tift Dwarf" (a release from Tifton, Ga., experiment station). Greens were top-dressed with pure sand thereafter.

The Makena Golf Course is not a rectangular plot of real estate such as most of our Minnesota courses. Rather, it meanders along the slope of Haleakala volcano, avoiding recent magma, lava tubes and deep gullies. I guarantee you would not follow a ball hit into the rough among the Pandana roots, acacia, cactus and miserable sharp volcanic rock. At the very edge of the fairways are prickly pear or beaver tail type of cactus. As can be seen in one of the accompanying photos, Don Lindblad is standing at the edge of a fairway along side of what looks like a stone wall. The stone structure is actually an ancient Polynesian Temple called a *heiau*. These structures are not to be tampered with or molested in any way. The Polynesians believe that since these were sacred places, the spirits of their ancestors rest there.

Son Michael Kolb wrote his Ph.D. Thesis on the *heiaus* of Maui and, in all probability as a state archaeologist for Hawaii, he had to survey this structure to get its historical significance before the developer could proceed with the construction of the new golf course.

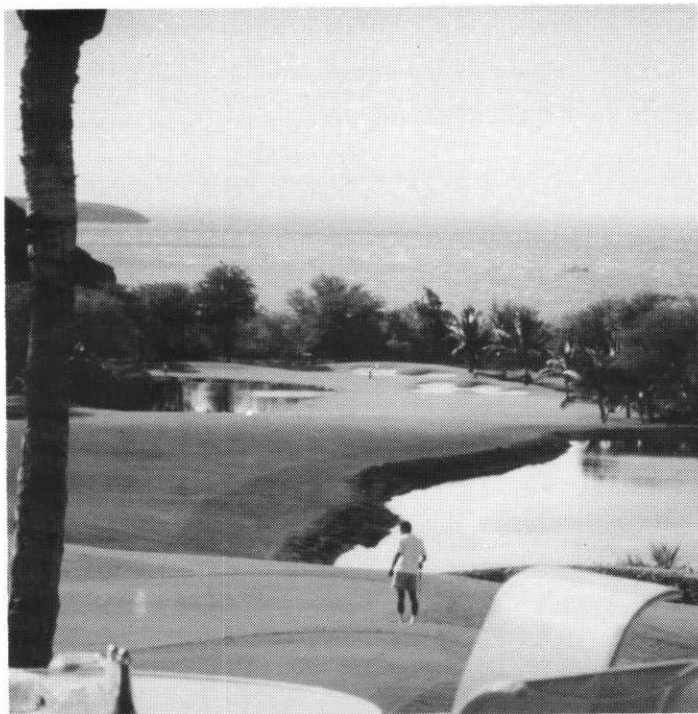
An interesting story about the owner of Makena Resort golf course is that the course does not open to the public until Mr. Tutsumi, a Japanese industrialist, plays it. For whatever reason, Don didn't know why. It was not until one year after completion that Mr. Tutsumi got around to playing the course and declared it open to the public. Another interesting aside during construction and probably still true today, the greatest hazard for injury and destruction to the golf courses on Maui were from "wild pigs." Actually they are domestic pigs that have escaped and become wild as opposed to the large tusk killer type.

Jack Kolb is a retired member of the MGCSA.

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