

A Visit to the Masters

By Tom Johnson, Editor
Superintendent at New Richmond G.C.

Stepping foot on Augusta National for the first time was like walking into a different world. It was almost overwhelming to experience the acres of green turf, beautiful trees, the sight and smell of the flowers and the sound of the birds. Indeed, this piece of property may be a little bit of heaven.

For three days I had the opportunity to walk every inch of Augusta National, enjoy its beauty and watch golf. What is so amazing is how perfect the grass looks. The carpet-like appearance of the turf has something to do with there being virtually no rough. One quarter of an inch height difference defines the rough and fairways. The bermuda grass is dormant this time of the year in the South, so with the exception of the greens, the entire 365 acres is overseeded with three varieties of perennial ryegrass. The greens, which were converted to bentgrass a few years ago,

Otherwise, greens are maintained by more familiar cultural practices. They are topdressed with 80/20, core aerified and hydrojected, rolled or brushed, and carefully monitored for disease. Augusta has its own soil lab where pathogens



The cabin Bobby Jones stayed in when he played at Augusta.

are identified and photographed. Some of the common turfgrass diseases include: Brown Patch, Dollar Spot, Fusarium Patch and Pythium Blight.

The only watering I saw was by hand on selected areas around the course after the day's play. During the Masters, tees are mowed at 1/4", fairways at 3/8" and greens around 1/8". Greens are mowed as many times as necessary to get the desired stimpmeter reading and mowing is done each morning and evening. Rolling is also used to raise the speed but only when needed. Watching fairways being mowed is like watching a Disney ride. Thirteen lightweight 5-gang mowers drive down the fairways in tandem, mowing in the same direction.

Schools and colleges in Augusta are closed for the week of the Masters. This golf event brings in about \$100 million to the local economy. The commercial aspect is evident in the golf shops at Augusta National as well. The golf shop sells around \$9 million in merchandise during that week. Although the golf shop merchandise is expensive, food on the course is very reasonable.

Each hole on the course is named after a plant. The property Augusta National is built on was a nursery, and all the plants were used on the course after it was built for a beautification program initiated by Clifford Roberts and Robert Tyre Jones, Jr. The original course was co-

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The view from Magnolia Lane as you approach the clubhouse.

are Pencross, but more recently Pennlinks is the grass of choice when overseeding or sodding. Maintaining bentgrass during the hot humid summers at Augusta National requires some unusual maintenance practices. Heating and cooling of number 12 green is done with a series of pipes about a foot below the surface. This system keeps the soil temperatures between 72° and 82° F. Since trees surround the 12th green, additional light is provided during the winter months. Sixteen grow lights are turned on over the green for 12 hours a night, five nights a week from October until mid-February. On number 13 green, the Azalea Hole, there is an experimental underground air system that allows moisture control. In the summer months, large fans are used for air circulation around many of the greens.

Augusta National —

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designed by the Scotsman, Allister McKenzie, and by Bob Jones. The course opened in 1932 and the first Augusta National Tournament was held in 1934. Horton Smith won the tourney.



Dr. Joe Duich, Penn State University, takes stimp readings on Augusta National's number nine green before play begins.

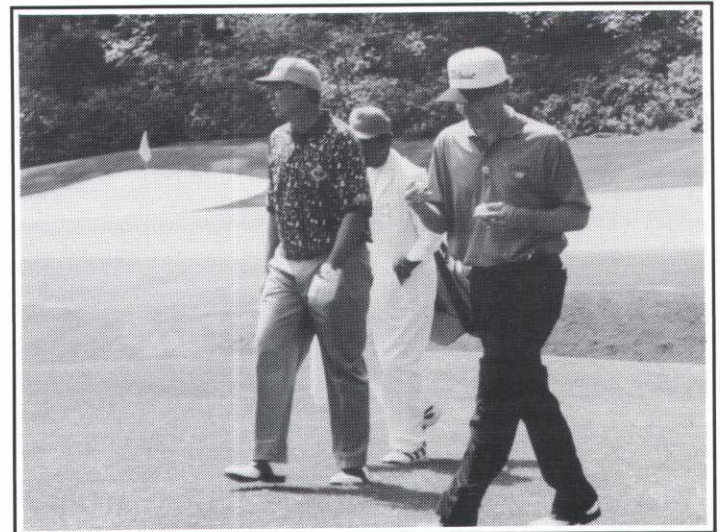
The magnitude of this place with its beautiful turf, Azaleas, Dogwoods and Southern Pines has to be seen in person to be fully appreciated. And yes, GCSAA class A members get in free. They said almost as many superintendents as PGA members attended the Masters this year. It was an exceptionally pleasant learning experience.



A classic clubhouse of the South.



Arnold Palmer on his way to accept the plaque commemorating his 40 years of Masters competition.



Minnesota's Tom Lehman with Lee Janzen walking off the famous Azalea Hole, number 13.

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TIGER WOODS, U.S. Amateur champ, tries to get the feel of Augusta's greens.




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at Augusta National

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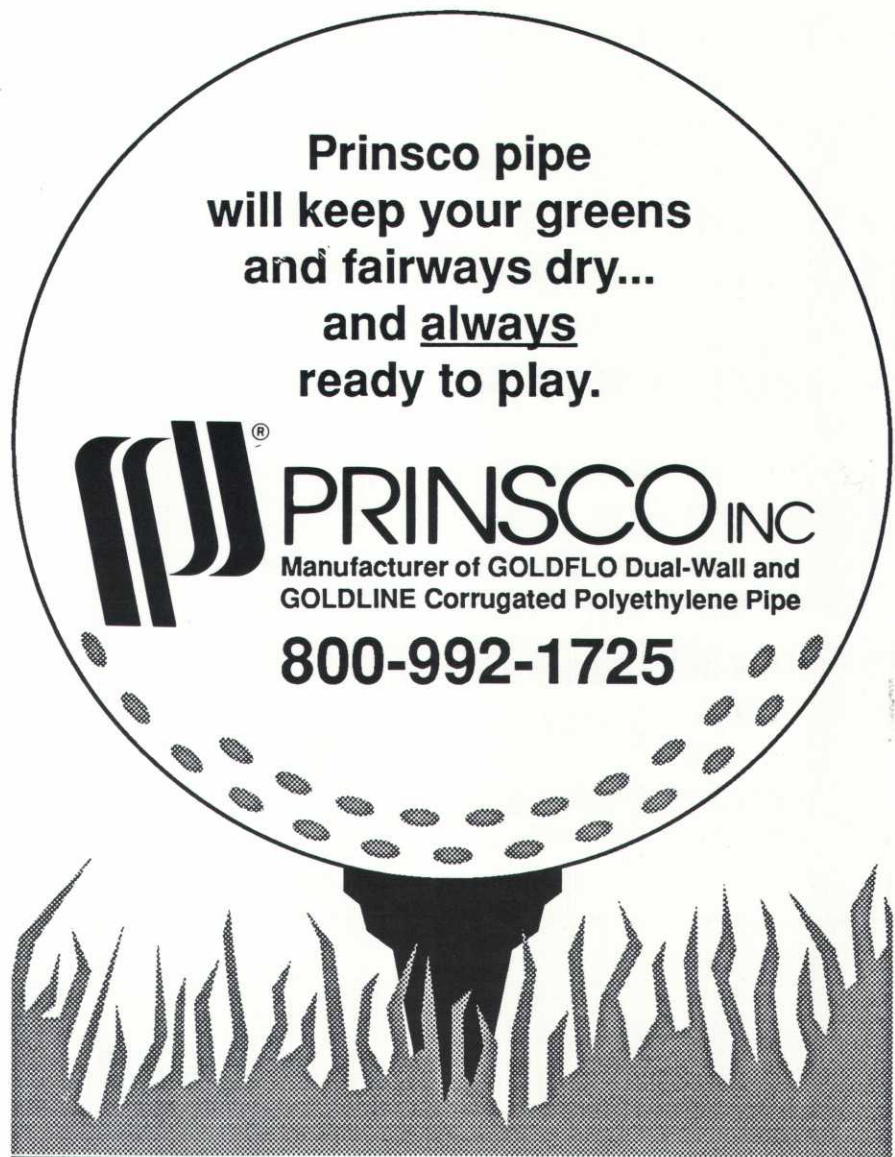
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