

# Jim Nicol Spends Weekend at 80th PGA at Vallhalla In Preparation for 2002 PGA at Hazeltine National

By RALPH TURTINEN

The 84th PGA Championship, to be held in August, 2002 at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska may seem eons away, but Superintendent Jim Nicol, CGCS already is getting his checklists ready for this major competition.

Last month the former president of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association spent a busy weekend at the 80th PGA at Vallhalla in Louisville, Ky.

"It was a good way to get a solid idea of what to expect, both inside and outside the ropes," said Nicol, 48, who was up before 5 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday, August 19-20, to meet with various tournament officials.

On Saturday he spent considerable time with the PGA rules people to review how they were setting up this very hilly Kentucky course which had some extreme slopes on some greens.

He also spent some early morning time with the Valhalla superintendent to learn what he had been doing and what Hazeltine would be expected to do.

Nicol said he "learned a lot about what went on outside the ropes, such as the corporate areas, various compounds and roads."

Jim also noted how important it is to be ready for any types of emergencies, like when three inches of rain fell during the night before the second round at Valhalla and the sudden problems that evolved when a mower clipped off a sprinkler head.

"Those things happen," he said, "and you have to be ready to cope with whatever comes up."

At the request of the PGA, considerable advance preparations already are being made at Hazeltine. For example, the course has been lengthened (it will play more than 7,300 yards), some bunkers have been redone and tees have been squared.

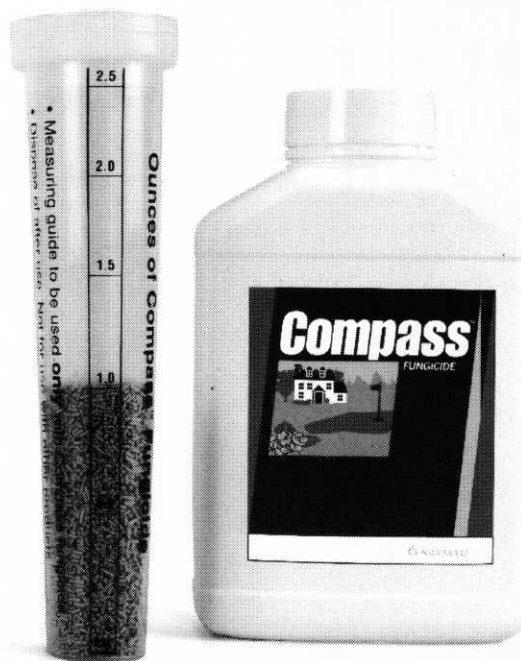
Some trial runs on the greens already have been held with the course being prepared to roll 12 feet from Tuesday through Sunday.

Nicol is happy and excited about the PGA coming to Hazeltine, where he has been superintendent since 1996.

He has had considerable experience in preparing courses for tournaments, like the Senior PGA when he was super at Bunker Hills.

"But the PGA is huge," he said, "and I look forward to getting our course ready. It's a real challenge, and it should be a lot of fun."

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