



TURFGRASS MATTERS

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Hobbit's Glen Hosts Sr. Classic

Imagine that you have just been told that a major PGA event will be held at your course in only six months. What would you do to prepare? Bill Neus, CGCS, of Hobbits Glen in Columbia, MD lived through this exact experience. In November of 1997, Bill learned that Hobbit's Glen was chosen by the PGA to host the State Farm Senior Classic tournament from June 29 - July 5.

Immediately, Bill and the Columbia Association went to work to prepare the course for the event which would draw approximately 80,000 people to Hobbit's Glen. Bill began by identifying goals for his course. He wanted to change the fertilization program to thicken up the rough and put down extra seed in the landing area. Then he used his many connections through GCSAA to gain insights from superintendents who had lived the experience of hosting a major event.

When the Senior Tour officials visited Hobbit's Glen to give hole-by-hole advice, Bill was prepared. He was pleased to discover that the officials thought that the course was great and they only offered suggestions for minor changes involving the leveling of some tees. Of the PGA officials, Bill says, "They were really easy to work with. They never told you how to do anything, they just made some recommendations about what should be done." The Columbia Association then created a supplemental budget for Hobbit's Glen. They provided funds to hire ten additional employees from May-September, and extra money for chemicals, sand, mulch, and improvements to the teeing areas.

PGA agronomists were consulted about green density, tree pruning and other requirements. After meeting with the agronomists, Neus called Stan Zontek from the USGA for more advice. Stan was able to help Bill see his golf course from a television perspective. He was able to point out dead limbs in trees, that the television cameras would pick-up, and he offered much advice about mowing patterns that compensate for problems with swells in fairways. Stan also assisted with the timing of fungicide and cosmetic applications.

Bill decided that his crew needed to make some changes to prepare for the tournament, so with two months still to go, he had his crew begin walk mowing greens and hand raking bunkers. At the beginning of June, the crew at Hobbit's Glen began heavy edging of bunkers. Bill rationalized that, if his crew were able to get done the bulk of the work early they would only have to go back and clean up their edges the week before the tournament. Bill also expanded the herbicide and fungicide programs. He treated the fairways three times with TGR and applied Heritage on the greens the week before the tournament.

Bill elicited the support of area superintendents. He put Ryland "Chappy" Chapman, Superintendent of Fairway Hills in charge of volunteers for the tournament. Chappy asked 27 volunteers from area golf courses to volunteer, their time and expertise for the tournament. To prepare for the massive undertaking of maintaining the course during

the weeklong event all volunteers were invited to Hobbit's Glen two weeks prior to the tournament for an educational session. They were able to tour the facilities and pick up their passes. One major challenge for the crew was the fact that regular play only halted one-half day before the tournament began. When the tour comes back next year Bill is hoping to get more time for last minute details to be completed before play begins.

At tournament time, Bill used all personnel available to him to accomplish the tasks necessary to keep the tour players happy. Each morning they mowed greens, changed cups, mowed collars and aprons, and dragged the dew from the fairways, with the remainder of maintenance tasks being done in the evening. The most challenging aspect of maintaining the course for a week-long

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Bullets from the Boardroom

MAAGCS Secretary - Nick Vance, CGCS



A few of our members have called the office or one of the Board of Directors to ask why the Professional Golfers Association has changed their policy regarding the admittance of spouses into their tournaments. We do not have any input into the regulations set forth by the PGA, so the best way to find out why the change was made would probably be to write the local PGA office and also send a copy to the national PGA. We should get some response from one or both of them as to why the change was made. To the best of our knowledge the game of golf is still being promoted as a family activity and one of the ways to keep it that way is to have the entire family involved.



Congratulations are in order for Mr. and Mrs. Allen Bohrer. Allen advised us at the July meeting that he and his wife have purchased Newsom Seed as of July 1, 1998. We are happy for them and we are looking forward to a continued good relationship with the company. We will all miss the business relationship we have had with Mr. and Mrs. Strick Newsom over the past several years, but we wish them continued success and happiness in all their future endeavors. We hope they stay around to enjoy the personal relationships we have formed from the industry.



On June 8, 1998 we received a Briefax from the Government Relations Department of GCSAA. It read as follows: The budget proposed by President Clinton for FY99 (starting in October 1998) again this year includes NO funds to support the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) in the United States Department of Agriculture. GCSAA and other turfgrass research supporters were successful the last two years in getting funding restored in the spending bills developed by Congressional appropriations committees (they do not have to follow the President's recommendations). Efforts are needed again this year to let Congress know that federal funding for this program should not be eliminated. Your elected officials in Congress are beginning to develop FY99 spending bills for government programs. Calls, letters and e-mails are needed nationwide to urge Congress to continue funding NTEP. For information on how to contact your members of Congress, visit GCSAA Online (members only) or call the GCSAA government relations department at (800) 472-7878 ext. 6 1 0 or e-mail at criordan@gcsaa.org.

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tournament was keeping green speed consistent from green-to-green, day-to-day. Bill says, "I just went into it with an attitude that we'll try to do everything we can to prepare the course in the condition that the PGA wants."

On July 4 the Columbia Association and the FORE Baltimore Foundation invited all those who volunteered to work on the golf course to a catered dinner at Fairway Hills to thank them for their tireless efforts. Chappy was also pleased with the volunteer efforts of area golf course personnel. He says, "Ninety percent of our volunteers have asked to come back next year. I think that shows what a success this was."

Hobbit's Glen has a three-year contract with the PGA Tour, so Bill and his cohorts can look forward to preparing the course for at least two more Senior Classic events. With this year's success to build on, one can only for see good things in the future for Hobbit's Glen.

by Douglas Fleming

Assistant Superintendent, Hillendale CC