



# 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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