

Computers and the Game of Golf

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Computers have changed the way we live, from making reservations for airline tickets instantly, to building a good portion of the automobiles we drive. In fact, computers are starting to play a big role in the game we love so well-----GOLF.

Handicaps are computed in seconds with the aid of computers now being introduced by the G.A.M. Clubs are using computers to do everything from inventory control to billing and handling accounts payable.

I'm sure we have all heard stories of clubs taking on computers and immediately doubling their office staff in order to run the computer. Well technology has changed and the computers that are used today are hands on equipment which take very little training for the average person to use effectively.

At Barton Hills we have installed a new two row automatic watering system which is controlled by a computer.

To explain what a computer does over a conventional controller, it's as if we had a separate controller for every valve on the course, making it possible for random selection of any valve at any time throughout the watering schedule.

Being able to match water application rate with any given soil infiltration rate on any area of the course will insure uniform playing conditions. Taking this one step further, matching application rate to water infiltration rate will also insure uniform growing conditions for the grass plant.

Being able to replace only the moisture loss from the turf on any given day was of next importance when selecting a computer. Basically, this is done by the use of a small weather computer which records wind direction and speed, barometric pressure and rate of change per hour and temperature (high and low) along with rainfall. The computer has the ability to take these factors and increase or decrease the basic water schedule accordingly. This feature lends itself nicely to water and energy conservation.

Water conservation is a distant term for use in Michigan, but within 10 years I'm sure it will mean as much to us as it does to Southerners and Westerners of this country.

As for the future of computers in the golf course operation, I'm sure we will see computers signaling disease and insect infestation so that control of these problems will be precise and accurate thus saving thousands of dollars in their control over conventional means.

I would encourage everyone involved in the maintenance of turf to take a good hard look at their maintenance operation and have an open mind as to where computers might be put into use.