

December, 1995

## The Main Course

Rancho Cañada Golf Club - December 8, 1995

### Rancho Cañada - Not Looking to 3-peat

By Bob Costa

The smile eases from Tim Greenwald's face when asked if he is looking forward to winter's first rain. The memories of last winter, and the floods that twice forced the closure of 18 holes is still fresh in his mind. "Without question the biggest challenge I've ever faced in my turfgrass career," Greenwald states, "I can't imagine how it could possibly be any worse." Greenwald describes the day after the March 10th flood as a scene of total destruction. What had been the day before, a 36 hole golf course bisected by the serene Carmel River had been transformed into a scene that could have provided a set for a Hollywood disaster movie. Mother Nature had struck again, this time her footprint would be left for months, for all to see.

The first task the following morning for Greenwald and his staff was to assess course conditions. Greenwald set out on foot, video camera in hand, and realized very shortly that his number one priority was to remove silt from the greens. Fifteen greens in all were covered in silt, ranging in thickness from several inches, to several feet.

Removing the silt proved to be a tedious task. Hand shovels and water were used to scrape and wash the soupy mud onto the collars and green surrounds. After four days the job was complete and Greenwald's attention now turned to developing an 18 hole golf course that would allow Rancho Cañada to reopen. "We combined ten holes from the East Course and eight holes from the West Course," Greenwald remembers, "utilizing holes on the north side of the river." For lack of a better name the new look golf course was referred to as the "Dream 18" by the staff, a name that helped

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### The Course

Rancho Cañada Golf Club is a 36 hole golf complex designed by Robert Putman. The courses opened for play in 1975, and are currently celebrating their 25th anniversary. Located in Carmel Valley, nestled against the Santa Lucia Mountains, the West Course, site of this year's tournament, plays through native Cottonwoods and Monterey pines. The Carmel river runs through the property and comes into play on several holes.

After severe flooding last winter, both courses have fully rebounded and feature many new improvements, including a new practice facility, cart paths, a bridge and renovated bunkers.

The West Course, was selected as one of the courses used in last years GCSAA's conference tournament. It

has also served as the site for numerous qualifying tournaments and most recently the U.S. Senior Amateur.

### Our Host

Tim Greenwald has served as the Golf Course Superintendent at Rancho Cañada for the past 10 years. Tim began his career in Golf Course Management at Quail Lodge, located in Carmel Valley, where he was involved in the TARP program. A native of Michigan, Tim was involved in the lawn care industry before he ventured out to California in 1979. Under Tim's guidance, Rancho Cañada has served as the host course for the Christmas Party several times. The tournament has carried the name of former Rancho Cañada Superintendent, Larry Lloyd.

### General Meeting Slated for January

A general meeting is being planned for late January, at a yet to be determined South Bay location. The meeting was proposed at a recent board meeting as a means of developing some dialogue with the membership regarding the proposed affiliation agreement with GCSAA. The meeting will also serve as an open forum, whereby members are encouraged to share, directly with the board, comments, concerns, and/or ideas regarding association programs, policies or board performance. The meeting is scheduled for late afternoon, and will include a short presentation, followed by the meeting and dinner. Details will be available in early January.



## Rancho Cañada - No 3-peat (Cont'd)

communicate maintenance tasks to the crew and provided a little comic relief.

The range of problems confronting the maintenance staff were immense. As a result of the flood waters, debris in the form of limbs, trees, picnic tables, fences and other household items from neighboring properties were scattered throughout the courses. Twenty two satellite controllers had been flooded, many contained up to a foot of silt. Sections of asphalt cart path had been lifted and floated several feet before coming to rest. Over forty bunkers had been destroyed. But the most devastating problems were the complete loss of one bridge and damage to three others, severe erosion along sections of the river bank, which left sprinklers and lateral lines dangling in the water, and over 25 acres of silt which covered portions of fairways and roughs.

### Silt Removal A Challenge

"Removing the silt from the fairways and roughs was the most difficult challenge we faced," Greenwald said. "In some areas we were looking at up to three feet of material." The removal was painstaking. Thanks to past experience and a resourceful mechanic, a solution was found. A 3" roller from a flail mower was welded to the blade of a small dozer, allowing the operator to rest the blade on the turf. He then was able to push the silt into piles, leaving the turf and irrigation system intact. "We pushed silt for over two months," said Greenwald. When we completed the initial scrape with the dozer, a second operator scraped the turf one last time with a box scraper mounted on

a small tractor." The piles of silt were then loaded and transported to staging areas throughout the golf course where the material was eventually used in a variety of projects. Unfortunately, in spite of the efficiency of the silt removal, almost all the turf areas that had been affected were lost.

Next came the process of reestablishing the turf. Overseeding was the only cost effective solution, and so began the process of preparing the soil for seed. "We used a combination of techniques Greenwald reports." All the areas were dragged with a harrow to establish a finish grade and loosen the fine silt layer. Perennial ryegrass seed was then placed with a drill seeder, loaned courtesy of Weststar Distributing. Some areas were aerified as well, to penetrate the silt layer and provide a more protected seed bed.

On Memorial Day, 71 days later, Rancho Cañada was back in operation as a 36 hole golf facility, but by no means was the work complete. A bridge still needed to be replaced and numerous miscellaneous projects need to be completed. As a result, a three person flood crew was kept busy into early September.

Looking back, Greenwald shakes his head and says that during those first few days after the flood, he knew that it would require time and patience to put it all back together. However, each day brought a little progress and Greenwald credits the dedication and efforts of the maintenance staff for making it happen. "I can't say enough about the crew," Greenwald says. "A lot of the work was pretty physical, under less than ideal conditions, but no one complained, in fact the challenge

brought us all a little closer. There's no question the situation demanded a lot of all of us. To maintain morale we met with the crew frequently, establishing a series of short term goals, otherwise the situation looked to overwhelming. An occasional BBQ also helped relieve some of the pressure, and prior to the opening of the 'Dream 18', we had a staff golf tournament."

### Few Reminders Remain

Eight months later only a few reminders remain from a day Greenwald and his staff would just as soon forget. "In many ways, the courses have ben-

efited from the disaster," reflects Greenwald. "There's no question, the bunkers were renovated, the new bridge, and the areas that were reseeded have improved the appearance and playability of the courses." When asked his thoughts as he looks back upon the past several months Greenwald's smile returns as he says, "It's amazing the challenges this business throws your way, particularly when you least expect it. In spite of it all, there's no greater feeling than knowing that as a staff, you overcame the situation and the courses are better than ever. ☀

## Institute A Success

By all accounts, the 1995 Institute lived up to its advanced billing. Attendance at this years seminar was the highest ever, and comments were overwhelmingly positive. The topic of lake management proved to be a complex one. By days end, it was clear that the cause of aquatic problems are many, and their solutions vary based upon a variety of factors. Although the seminar may not have provided specific answers, it did present the topic in a comprehensive manner. The bottom line is that lake management is no different that any aspect of turf management. There are no single solutions, and perhaps we need to accept the fact that like putting greens, it may not be realistic for aquatic features to appear "perfect" at all times.

As always, successful events such as these are the result of the collective efforts of many. Our thanks to Dr. Harivandi, Randy Gai, Robert Tyler and staff at the Fountaingrove Resort, the affiliate members, whose participation in the trade show provides the funds for the

reception, and most importantly to the membership for their annual support. Through the excellent response we received in the survey, the education committee is dedicated to making next years event equally successful.

### Institute Sponsors

This years Institute would not have been possible without the generous contributions of our very supportive Affiliate sponsors. Please acknowledge this helpful group: Delta Bluegrass, Weststar Distributing, Micro Solutions, Turf Equipment Services, Rainbird Golf Division, Target Specialty Products, The Scotts Co., Zeneca, Soil Solutions Corp., West Coast Turf, DHR Construction, Pacific Open Space, Inc., Sierra Pacific Turf Supply, Western Farm Service, Hunter Associates, United Horticultural Supply, Par Ex/Vigro Industries, Thompson Irrigation Co., R.V. Cloud, Linwood Supply, Cambridge Sportsturf Systems, Automatic Rain Company, E.D. Aeration, Diversified Waterscapes, Applied Biochemists, Far West Supply, J. R. Simplot/Best Fertilizer Co., Prescription Turf & Ornamental Naiad Company, Inc.