

# PREPARING FOR THE PGA: SUPERINTENDENT TELLS ORDEAL

By Bruce F. Shank, executive editor

Sports announcers covering major golf tournaments rarely provide information on preparation and maintenance of the course or on the individuals who worried and sweated for more than two years to get everything ready for perhaps six hours of television exposure.

The television viewer assumes, for the most part, that any course could host a major tournament with minor adjustments. The Professional Golfers' Association and the superintendents involved in the PGA Championship will tell you otherwise.

The 1981 PGA was held at the Atlanta Athletic Club in Duluth, Georgia. The historic club, home course of professional Bob Jones and early employer of football trophy namesake John Heisman, had a reputation to protect.

The president of the Atlanta Athletic Club, Merriell Autry and the tournament committees knew the selection of a superintendent was critical to the success of the event. The 2,500 members were not to be embarrassed by mistakes.

With the advise of the PGA, the Club selected Jim Ganley in 1979, then superintendent of Forest Oaks Country Club in Greensboro, North Carolina. Ganley managed the preparation of that course for the Greater Greensboro Open for three years.

Ganley started his turf career under the tutelage of Dr. Joseph Troll at the University of Massachusetts. Immediately, Ganley caught golf fever and was acting superintendent of a golf course at the age of 18 during the summer. In less than ten years he and golf course architect Jeffrey Cornish of Amherst, Mass., built six courses, including the Connecticut Golf Club for Lawrence Wein, then owner of the Empire State Building. This course is now called the Golf Course at Aspituck.

To apply his experience to turf in the West Coast, Ganley worked for O.M. Scott & Sons in research and development in California. His next move was to Pinehurst, one of the largest golf facilities in the world located in North



**A special touch** for PGA golfers, viewers, and gallery was this annual display celebrating the event. Despite rain and clouds, the display brightened the atmosphere during the tournament.

Carolina. From there he went to Forest Oaks.

During his career Ganley made an effort to meet the touring professionals and get their opinion of tournament courses. Ganley is a close friend of Lanny Watkins. He also talked with PGA staff at every opportunity. It was the professionals and the PGA staff that knew of Ganley's experience and passed the word to tournament club officers.

### Tournament preparation

The Atlanta Athletic Club has 36 holes in two different courses, the Highlands and the Riverside courses. Originally designed by Robert Trent Jones, the course had been improved by golf course architects Joe Finger and Tom Fazio.

The largest problem upon Ganley's arrival was an older irrigation system with incomplete coverage. The Highlands course was to be the tourna-

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ment course and Ganley began to build a case for an improved irrigation system on the Highlands and repair of the older system on the Riverside.

Ganley felt a misting system on the perimeter of the greens, separate from the course system, would help regulate surface temperatures in the 95 degree plus Atlanta heat. Working with Toro Irrigation Division, Ganley chose a double-row system looped in every fairway.

With evidence and drawings in hand, Ganley went before the Greens Committee and got a go ahead. In 1979, more than 77,000 ft. of pipe was laid in the Highlands course.

With slightly more than one year before the tournament, Ganley knew green reconstruction or renovation was tricky. Instead, he chose to heavily topdress with pure sand. The greens had a percolation rate of 2½-inches/hour and he wanted to get it up to 4-inches/hour. His crew double aerified the greens with ⅝-inch spoons and topdressed with pure sand. Percolation increased 25 percent. Now this process is used in the spring and fall every year in addition to light sand topdressings 8 times per year.

All 36 greens are Penncross usually cut at 5/32-inches. The Highlands greens were double-cut at 3/32-inches for the PGA. The greens receive 6 lbs. of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. The fertilizer program was not increased from previous superintendents.

The fungicide program includes Dyrene, Tersan 1991 with Danconil, and Tersan 1991 with Actidione and Thiram. Ganley doubled fungicide applications from previous programs.

He also doubled the insecticide program



**Ganley shows PGA officials** the triple-cut fairways prior to the tournament.

which includes Scotts Granular 2 Insecticide, Dursban and Proxol.

The herbicide program for greens centers around two applications (April 15 and June 15) of Betasan preemergence control of crabgrass and goosegrass. Fairway weeds are controlled by two applications of Balan and spot treatments with MSMA. No treatments are made during July to prevent discoloration.

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### Fungicide and insecticide programs were doubled.

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For the tournament the fairways were triple-cut, the third cut with a greens mower, at ⅜-inch. The fairways are Tifgreen 328 Bermudagrass fertilized with 3 lbs. N/1,000 sq. ft./year. Ganley does not overseed greens or fairways.

Tees are also Tifgreen. They receive 4-4½ lbs. N/1,000/year and are mowed at ¼-inch. The rough is mowed at 2-inches and 4-inches depending upon the location.

The course is heavily trapped. Many greens have traps both in front and back.

### Other improvements

More than 5 acres of sod was purchased to renovate fairways, tees and greens prior to the tournament. Part of this was a 20,000 square foot practice green.

More than 60,000 feet of drainage tubing was installed. This proved exceptionally wise since it rained the week before and two days of the tournament. To keep playing conditions on the greens consistent Ganley misted the greens periodically during dry days.

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The crew spent much of its time in 1980 pruning trees damaged by ice in previous winters and planting more trees. More than 6,000 annuals were planted to improve the color of the course and clubhouse area. The dam to the holding pond was decorated with plants to spell out 1981 PGA. Television crews used this shot frequently during coverage.

Additional drainage helps the course survive rain before and during the tournament.

**Help from his friends**

The vast job to prepare for the tournament required a good staff and some help from former staffers. Ganley's staff of 24 included assistant superintendent Dave Nugent, a turf graduate of Mississippi State University; John Feruchie of Florida's Lake City Community College; and Mike Martin of North Carolina's Catawba Valley Technical College. From Forest Oaks, on a temporary basis, came Frank Harris and Kent Southern, both from North Carolina State University.

**Bidding for more**

The Atlanta Athletic Club has already submitted bids for the U.S. Open in 1987 and the PGA in 1991. With Ganley's help it stands a good chance of getting the tournaments.

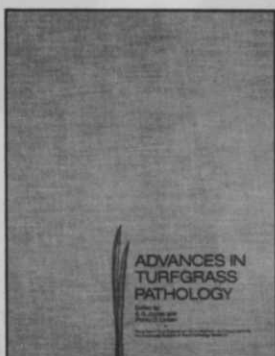
Tournaments are a business which makes money. This profit can be funnelled back into the course for improvements and expansion. The club members benefit, the professional golfers benefit, and the superintendent can better justify needed improvements to his course. It is a business where the superintendent's value is clearly visible.

On the other hand, superintendents have been known to lose their jobs following tournaments where the Club and Tournament Committee were disappointed. It's a high stakes game which all superintendents and their families may not want to play. Superintendents work long hours as it is.

As in Ganley's case, the Club must understand that additional, well-trained staff are needed in the months prior to a tournament. It must reward the superintendent for his heavier load. And, it must work with the PGA, the USGA, and perhaps the GCSAA to assure a playable and presentable course for the big moment. **WTT**

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