

Illahe

Nestled in the shadow of Mt. Hood, a Salem country club is becoming more picturesque and efficient with Bill Swancutt's renovations

by **Maureen Hrehocik**,
managing editor

Renovation tops Bill Swancutt's list of priorities for his Salem, OR, course, Illahe. The superintendent of the 18-hole, private course who's Indian name means "country" or "place," says the William Bell design has caused some problems that he is working on correcting. Rebuilding tees are a top priority.

"Some of the tees have settled and we're in the process of rebuilding those," Swancutt said. "We've also worked on hole No. 4 which is a par 5 hole."

Other changes aren't as drastic. Off the first and the tenth tee there is an 80-foot drop to the fairway.

"It's very hard to keep mowed," Swancutt said. "I'm going to try using Embark (growth regulator) to keep the turf under control. I've used growth regulators before and they worked well."

Swancutt also uses Toro Turf Pro 84 triplex mowers on his predominantly annual bluegrass course and says the time they save is worth the extra cost to him. He likes the idea of being able to add attachments to the machines.

Greens are mowed six times a week at 1/8 inch; fairways are mowed three to four times a week at 5/8 inch depending on conditions; tees are also mowed three to four times a week at 4/16 inch. He



The first and tenth tees drop 80 feet to the fairway. Swancutt is eager to try growth regulators on the slope because of its inaccessibility.

aerifies in the spring and fall with a Ryan Greensaire. He also overseeds twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall with a CBS blend, "to stress the poa we have," Swancutt says.

Tees are overseeded and top-dressed with Penneagle bentgrass in the spring and summer and are aerified once a year.

Greens are fertilized with 6 to 6.5 pounds of nitrogen per thousand square feet; tees with 3.5 pounds and fairways with 2.8 pounds. Roughs are not fertilized.

Disease prevention

"I use more water solubles in the spring and fall," Swancutt explained.

His disease prevention program consists of treating an affected area with a contact solution and then retreating it with a systemic.

"Our biggest problems are fusarium in the winter and anthracnose in the summer," he said.

He contracts out all spraying "that way we only interrupt play for a day. I don't use chemicals for poa control because it's too expensive."

Fairways are irrigated with a Rainbird automatic maxi control system. Roughs are irrigated 35 feet out. Swancutt is trying to reduce his expenses to keep his \$200,000 maintenance budget in

line by overseeding fairways with ryegrass to cut water usage. He sometimes uses Aquagro as a wetting agent.

"Our fairways aren't real wide and we don't mow all the way up to the tees so that saves time," he said.

Challenges

Swancutt graduated from Oregon State in 1976 with a degree in agronomy. He worked part-time for awhile at the Eugene Country Club. He then moved to Tualatin Country Club before coming to Illahe three years ago. He is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Oregon GCSA.

"The biggest challenge I face here is communicating with the membership," Swancutt said. "I have a good rapport with the greens committee and we discuss improvements to the course. We have a long list of priorities for improvements." **WT&T**



Part of Swancutt's renovation project - rebuilding a sand trap.



Bill Swancutt, superintendent of Illahe Country Club, Salem, OR.