

Keeping the new Tournament Players Club at Eagle Trace "tournament ready" is a 365-day-a-year job.

This south Florida course is one of the few stadium golf courses in the country. With Fred Klauk Jr.'s brand of course maintenance, Eagle Trace is a champ.

The Eagle Soars

by Ron Hall, assistant editor

Sunshine. Golf. The glamour of the likes of Nicklaus and Trevino.

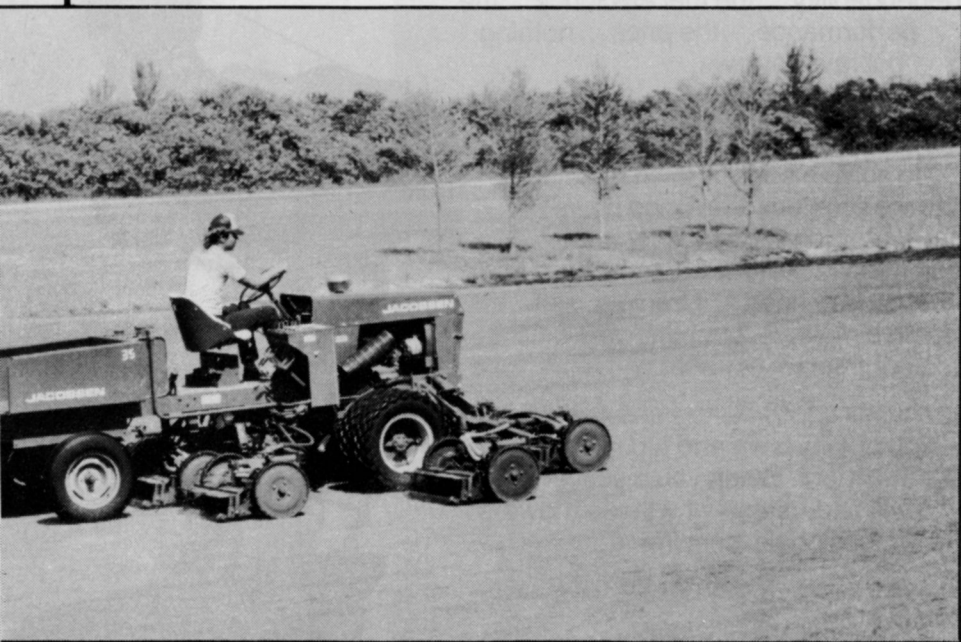
Fred Klauk, Jr., sometimes wonders if maybe, just maybe, he's getting too much of a good thing. Klauk is the superintendent of the year-old Tournament Players Club at Eagle Trace in Coral Springs, FL. It's the home of the

skimmer, isn't used to keep his ears from freezing and snapping off but to protect his crop of thinning blonde hair from the bright ball of the south Florida sun. His main defense against winter is a chapstick which he flourishes against the ravages of those soft ocean breezes from the east.

Golf is a seven-day-a-week, 12-month-a-year activity here 20 miles or so north of Fort Lauderdale. "We never shut down at all," Klauk explains. "Of course we wear out equipment a helluva lot faster than anybody else. We don't get an opportunity to rebuild our equipment over the winter like we would like to."

There simply is no down time at the Eagle Trace course where a golfer can stop his golf car on the tallest of the many spectator mounds and look out over the Everglades in one direction and back to the palm-lined suburbs of Coral Springs in another. And he'll see green, even in the middle of January. This is a new course, now in its second year. It incorporates

"We wear out equipment a helluva lot faster than anybody else."



The fairways are narrow at the Tournament Players Club at Eagle Trace and can be mowed with this Jacobsen mower in about five hours.

Honda Classic Tournament, one of the early stops for the touring pros. It's also one of the few clubs in the country that is a showcase for stadium golf—complete with spectator stands right on the course.

When winter dumps on most of us again and a wet snow swings in off the Great Lakes where everything is either brown or gray or some strange combination of both, Klauk prowls the green undulations of his manicured course in a powder blue golf shirt. His ever-present hat, a white

Somebody's got to do it. Somebody's got to make the sacrifice.

Why not Klauk? After all, he's never held a job that wasn't within a hefty pitch of a green.

Maintenance never ends

But, let's not downplay Klauk's task. Maintaining Eagle Trace is a fulltime job. That's *fulltime* as in 365 days a year. Or as Klauk, located smackdab in the middle of golf heaven, says as he looks upward seemingly in supplication, "It never ends. It just never ends."

new ideas. And it's the new home of the Honda Classic stop for the touring professionals in early March. It still takes some old-fashioned planning and elbow grease to keep it sharp year round.

Klauk knows golf

That's the challenge, but Klauk knows something about the game of golf.

Practically a native of South Florida, the 34-year-old Klauk once considered the tour himself, playing well in a number of junior tournaments before ending up at the University of Florida. He found himself in the company of some pretty heady golfing company, guys like Andy Bean and Andy North who, of course, have gone

on to make ripples in the professional ranks.

"I just like this end of the business better anyway," Klauk, a two handicap golfer says. Anyway, he consoles himself, there's the annual superintendent's tournament. He finished fourth once. Two good rounds in a row. Who knows? Fame on the links, however, finishes a distant second to his maintenance responsibilities. He served first as the superintendent at Johns Island Club, Vero Beach, FL, followed by an eight-year stint maintaining the Pine Tree Course at Boynton Beach. He came to the Tournament Players Club at Eagle Trace in 1983 and helped get the course in playing condition. The course, designed by Arthur Hills, Toledo, OH, opened for play in December 1982.

"I came here right after the Wadsworth Golf Company planted the course," Klauk remembers. "I took over when the TOUR took over in November 1983. The Honda Classic was only five months away. The grow-in process had to be finished and we had to get the greens in tournament condition."

Taking a new course and seeing it through its maturation while keeping it tournament ready for the big money Honda Classic as well as for club members who plunk down as much as

"An irrigation system should be a very simple system"

—Klauk

\$25,000 for memberships is a fair-sized responsibility even with a maintenance budget of \$440,000. The budget is a bit deceiving. It also includes maintenance of the new \$2.5 million club house. Klauk works with an 11-person crew.

Challenging course

The design of the course is both a blessing and a challenge for Klauk and his crew.

Playing just over 7,000 yards the



Fred Klauk, Jr., walks the 18th hole. The rows of seating will be filled for the Honda Classic in March.

fairways, planted exclusively with 419 Bermudagrass, are narrow, and approach the so-called "target golf" concept. Klauk's crew can mow the fairways with the Jacobsen HF-15 fairway mower in about five hours. "The turf is only one year old," Klauk explains, "so it has quite a bit of growth to do yet. Most Bermuda courses look their best after about three years of maturing." The large areas of rough can be easily handled with a Jake five-gang ramlift.

The greens are handwalked daily with Jake greensmowers, gradually being lowered through the winter so they'll be fast for the pros in early March. They are overseeded with a Penneagle, Penncross bentgrass combination. Klauk watches the overseeding carefully because of the drying winds off the Atlantic. "We've got to be careful because the bentgrass doesn't have an established root system yet," he says. A CBS blend of ryegrasses is used in the overseeding of tees and roughs, usually the first week of October.

In addition to the sand bunkers (the white, coarse-textured sand is trucked in from LaBelle 150 miles away), Eagle Trace has its share of confidence-breaking grass bunkers. Easier to maintain than their sand cousins, the grass traps first found favor at the Tournament Players Club at Sawgrass near Jacksonville.

Klauk says what few disease and insect problems he's encountered so far have not been major. Some leaf

spot and isolated occurrences of pythium and brown patch are controlled by the use of standard broad spectrum fungicides, while mole crickets are handled with Oftanol and sod webworms with Dursban.

Although Klauk's crew tried aerating the course with a pair of aerifiers manufactured in Australia, they found that equipment hard to control. They use a Ryan Greensaire in spite of the presence of large amounts of crushed coral rock in the soil. "We have to aerify as much as anyone up north," Klauk said of the course which was constructed over a former landfill site. Monthly light topdressing helps control thatch on the Eagle Trace greens.

Irrigation important

South Florida has rain, sometimes lots of it, maybe 60 inches a year. The problem is that it doesn't always fall when you want it too, the reason for the 1,000 Toro irrigation heads. The

Constructive criticism helps Klauk fine tune the Tournament Players Club at Eagle Trace

course is divided into four irrigation sections each with its own controls in the small building which houses the 220-hp pump capable of putting out 2200 gallons per minute. The water is drawn from 25 acres of lakes on the course. The amount of water falling on each green can also be controlled at the 54 control boxes located around the course.

Klauk is leery of the latest generation of computer-operated irrigation systems.

"An irrigation system should be a very simple system," he says. "I think they've (manufacturers) gotten a little bit too sophisticated with some things. I think you need something that is quick to maintain and repair. They've got to remember that we have to be doing this on a superinten-

dent's schedule. It has to be something we can repair ourselves."

Also falling within Klauk's responsibilities are the 3,000 trees planted as the course was being built. Species such as slash pine, live oak, cypress, buttonwood, and mastic are native to South Florida, while imports such as ficus benamina, pongram, and black olive give some of the spectator mounding areas a touch of the exotic. Orchid trees with their red flowers blossom several times during the year. Other flowering varieties include bottlebrush, poincianas, and pink tabebuias.

Stadium features

The most noticeable landmarks on the course (discounting the \$2.5 million colonial clubhouse and half-million dollar homes springing up in the adjacent private development) are the spectator viewing mounds evident at most of the greens. This allows spectators an unimpeded view of the action on the greens below. The concept, now being known as Stadium Golf, is taken to its ultimate on the 18th green where over mountains

earth and hundreds of railroad ties were sculpted into a grassy stadium capable of seating 30,000 viewers.

"Certainly it creates some problems when it comes to maintenance," Klauk says of the stadium 18th. Flymo mowers are handwalked in the seat-

Thousands of colorful annuals are worked into the rolling contours of the Eagle Trace course

ing areas and edges are trimmed with weed-eaters. It usually takes 3 1/2 to five hours to mow and trim the stadium, he points out. The use of slow-growing zoysia grass, however, reduces mowing to just once a month from October to May, maybe twice a month during the growing season.

How was Eagle Trace received in its first Honda Classic last march (Bruce Lietzke was the winner)?

"Close to 100,000 people saw the tournament in person," Klauk says. "We had rave reviews. The professionals were pleased with the overall course considering it was so new and their biggest recommendation was to rebuild the 12th green which we did. The criticism we received was very minor. We were extremely happy."

Klauk expects more changes in the future but nothing significant. He says, "I'm sure there'll be a few more changes as we receive constructive criticism from the professionals and the members, but I think Arthur Hills did a tremendous job in designing this course."

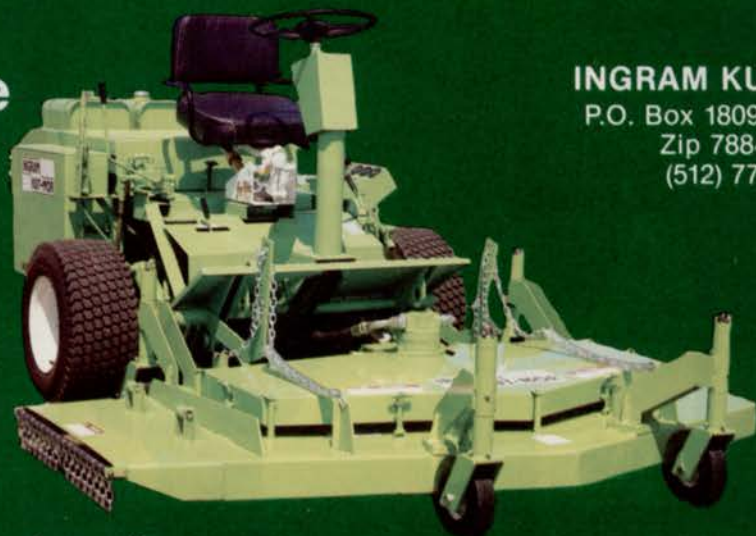
As for Klauk, the challenge of keeping Eagle Trace sharp ("We try to maintain the course year round as if we are going to have the Honda Classic tomorrow.") more than makes up 12-month-a-year grind. "I wanted to be associated with the PGA TOUR. Not too many people get to do that," he says. But, when his weeklong vacation rolls around, he usually leaves his clubs behind. He prefers to fish.

(See related stadium golf story, page 30). **WT&T**

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