

GOLF

Firestone gets cosmetic surgery

Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio, looked a bit tattered in September: all that lied at the end of each fairway on the South Course were craters and mounds of dirt.

No worry, says club superintendent Brian Mabie, who oversaw the replacement of all 18 greens after a two-year fight against bacterial wilt.

"You've got to make a mess to make progress. We had a lot of work to do," he tells WEEDS TREES & TURF. But by the spring, "all we should have to do is put on finishing touches."

Work began immediately after the annual World Series of Golf held Aug. 21-25, says Mabie.

And it was more than just replacing greens. At the same time, Firestone employees and independent contractors installed a drainage system beneath all greens where previously there was none.

Spectator mounds were constructed and small, subtle changes made.

It was all part of bringing the course up to USGA specs, he says.

Some of those changes: slope alterations on 10 greens with a severe contour change on No. 17; widening both the pond and fairway on No. 16 (the Monster); shortening No. 5 to 200 yards (from 234); reducing the green at 18 to almost half of what it was; and a general rebunkering.

"We're not trying to redesign things here. We're doing what everyone has suggested doing for years. We're working with a design that was developed in the 1920s," says Mabie.

Tom Pearson, respected architect for Golfforce Inc., suggested the changes after perusing the Firestone layout. Golfforce Inc. is owned by Jack Nicklaus.

"It was a tough thing that Tom did," says Mabie. "We've tried to improve the course without losing the characteristics that make it Firestone."

Mabie called in Tifton, Ga., resident Ernest Jones to shape the greens to specs suggested by Golfforce.



Brian Mabie, Firestone CC golf superintendent.

Those greens were seeded with Penncross bentgrass, says Mabie. No more local bentgrasses for Firestone.

The old Nimisila bentgrass developed bacterial wilt in the spring of 1984 and was effectively controlled with a bactericide over two golf seasons.

"It's funny," says Mabie. "They say the disease is stress-related but I didn't have it in my stress areas."

He continues: "We're one of the few course in northeast Ohio to have the disease, but it's really not that big of deal. I was amazed at the misinformation that came out about our greens."

Mabie says not one media type contacted him during tournament week to get facts on the problem.

Firestone, owned and operated by Club Corporation of America (CCA), will be new and improved by next spring, says Mabie, for both the golfer and spectator.

—Ken Kuhajda

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Survey lists turf maintenance problems

Annual bluegrass, dandelions and crabgrass are the most prominent problem weeds in the green industry, according to a survey recently released by the Mobay Chemical Co., Kansas City, Mo.

Forty-nine-and-a-half percent of all golf course superintendents who responded to the survey indicated that crabgrass was a major summer weed problem. Fifty percent said that dandelions were a major spring weed problem. *Poa annua* was most-cited as a major problem in the fall and winter.

Leading disease problems, by season, were helminthosporium leaf spot (spring), brown patch (summer), dollar spot (fall) and fusarium patch (winter). Each of those diseases was named as a problem by more than 50



percent of the survey respondents. Fusarium and fairy ring were called the "most difficult to control diseases because there's no effective product on the market" by 6.1 and 5.8 percent of golf course superintendents polled.

Cutworms were cited as a major summer insect problem by the most superintendents. Grubworms were ranked first in the spring and fall, and mole crickets were tops (on only 3.4 percent of responses) in the winter.

Most-named "difficult-to-control insect problem because there's not an effective product on the market" was the mole cricket, cited on 4.5 percent of the returned questionnaires.

Approximately 300 responses

were received from golf course superintendents. Questionnaires were also received from three other turf care segments: chemical lawn care, landscape contractors and grounds superintendents. Results of those segments closely approximated those from the golf course market.

Specific to the golf course market, however, was one question: "What trends most affect golf course management?"

Most frequent responses, in order of frequency, were:

- "increased maintenance costs/budget cuts"
- "increased play that is hard on the course"
- "restrictions on pesticide applications"
- "increasing green speeds that require more maintenance" and
- "lower fairway mowing heights."