

A MONUMENT TO THE PAST

Freddie Wong is caretaker for a pleasant public course on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. He likes its pace and heritage.



Multi-colored flora and historic rock formations are much in evidence at Kiahuna Golf Course.

Like its home state of Hawaii, Kiahuna Golf Course on the island of Kauai values its heritage and history. Just look down the first fairway and you see an original Hawaiian farmer's pigpen. Just to the side of another fairway is a stone monument left over from before the course was built.

The flora includes ancient banyan trees and a local shrubs called haole koa, from which herds of cattle used to feed.

The course is owned by Sports Shinko Co. Ltd., a Japanese concern. Owners have not fooled with the area's historical memorials.

"They've pretty much left the course alone," says superintendent Freddie Wong, a five-year veteran of the public course. "They aren't afraid to spend money. You just have to document everything."

Quiet pace

Wong spent his formative years as a superintendent with friend Mike Hathaway at Princeville Golf Course on another part of the island.



Freddie Wong thinks Hawaii can handle the increase in golf traffic.

"The pace here is quieter," says Wong, a master of understatement.

The course isn't long—6300 yards from the championship tees—but it's a difficult one. "Nobody has really torn the course up," notes Wong, adding that PGA touring pro Lee Trevino

holds the course record, 65.

Tifway 328 Bermudagrass was used on greens, common Bermuda on tees and fairways. Greens are mowed at $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch, tees and fairways at $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch and roughs at 2 inches.

If there are agronomic problems with the course, they come in the areas of soil and weeds.

It seems the course was constructed over the solid rock pan so common on the islands. Wong notes that thousands of tons of dirt had to be imported to make a 1½-foot soil base over the rock pan.

Water everywhere

Because of the high water table caused by the rock pan, "drainage here is not the best in the world," the superintendent says. The course has 66 sand traps which "sometimes get standing water in them, but we've heard only good comments (about the condition of the course)."

Weeds include a local Bermudagrass called manenia grass (a blue-green-tinted turf) and goosegrass.

"We use MSMA and Sencor (metribuzin) for the goosegrass," says Wong. "We're not using anything with a restricted label."

Fertilization is performed five times per year, year round. The greens get 2 lbs. of nitrogen per month, 1 lb. with each application. Fertilizer is Lesco 31-15-0 for fairways and 21-4-11 + iron for the greens, purchased from Lesco rep Wayne Ogasawara. The fairway fertilizer was chosen for its high phosphorous content.

Fairways and greens are aerified in May and September to alleviate the compaction caused by the 156 rounds of golf being played per day. The aerifier is a Ryan.

Wong, 45, swears by Toro mowers because of the service he gets. He also uses Toro Irrigation equipment.

General manager of the course is Charlie Ortega. Assistant superintendent Dean Uyehara helps Wong supervise 14 grounds employees and two mechanics.

Boom!

Golf is booming in Hawaii, much as it is on the continental U.S. And Wong is as positive about the sport as his North American counterparts.

"I think we have enough courses here in Hawaii to handle the increasing traffic," he philosophizes. "They're building 25 new courses here. I think we're in a hot industry now."

"I always thought this was a crazy game until I became a golf course superintendent." **LM**