

MENDING A WOUNDED BIRD

From hell-in-a-handbasket to tournament shape...It's been a long road, but Quail Hollow Resort is now a top-notch facility.

Make no mistake. Work still needs to be done on Quail Hollow Resort. But it's a far cry from the work that needed to be done 10 years ago to this inn and 18-hole golf course near Painesville, Ohio.

The inn and course combination is only 13 years old. The course, designed by Robert Von Hagge and former touring pro Bruce Devlin, opened its first nine holes in August 1975, the second nine a year later. It went bad shortly thereafter.

It became a Ramada Inn franchise in November 1975. That lasted less than a year, when it was bought by

Diamond Shamrock in October 1976.

"[Quail Hollow] probably would have closed without Diamond," says Jerry Mix, former director of public relations for the Diamond Shamrock Chemical Division.

Over the next five years, Mix notes, Diamond Shamrock "poured capital" into improving and remodeling the facilities. At the time, the company still had its world headquarters in Painesville. (It has since been moved to Dallas.) The company's intention was to turn Quail Hollow into a corporate training center. "It was an important resource to them," Mix says.

But Diamond intended to make it more than a training center. It wanted a resort. The key was a good marketing plan, something prior management hadn't had.

Diamond started by closing the golf course for major renovation in 1977. Irrigation systems, shelters, bunkers, improved path drainage and new equipment got first priority. Maintenance and cart storage buildings were erected, and renovations to guest rooms, the kitchen and clubhouse were completed.

The resort began hosting golf outings and corporate meetings; the refurbished restaurant, the Quail



By September, 1985, Quail Hollow was in tournament condition. That year, it hosted the Ohio open, which it will do again this September.



Superintendent Jim Loke believes in playing the course to inspect it. One of his additions has been dwarf Alberta spruce planted as 100-, 150- and 200-yard markers, here on the 13th.

Wagon, promoted dining and Sunday brunches.

More work

In 1982, Diamond brought in superintendent Jim Loke from Firestone Country Club. The first thing he did was to set his priorities.

"The greens were in such poor shape," he recalls. "They needed a lot of T.L.C."

Nine greens needed partial resodding because of bare spots. Where resodded, the substructure of the greens was rebuilt for better drainage. "If it was economically practical, we would have rebuilt all the greens. But it wasn't practical," Loke adds.

His second priority was to lower the cutting height "down to an acceptable level." His first stop was $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch, but that was too short for golf clients not used to fast greens. Loke now keeps it at $\frac{5}{32}$.

He also found the soil mix in the greens to be too high in silt, about 12 or 13 percent. They were too firm. An aggressive ongoing aerifying program and sand/peat top dressing is relieving the compaction.

While this was going on, Diamond sold the resort to Club Corporation of America, a country club managing

company, in September 1983. After moving its headquarters to Dallas and focusing primarily on oil and gas concerns, Diamond no longer needed the facility.

CCA bought Quail Hollow, the company's first venture at resort management, because Robert Dedman, the chairman and owner, "fell in love with the property," says Quail Hollow general manager Joseph Lucko. "He felt that, being in the country club business, getting into resorts was the natural way to go."

CCA, Lucko says, has maintained the improvement path that Diamond Shamrock set the facility on originally. Improvements to course drainage and bunkers continued and tree stumps were removed. In all, CCA pumped about \$500,000 into the course, half of that for new equipment.

Another area of concern for Loke was soil chemistry, a need to reduce acidity with lime plus gypsum and supplement of sulphate, (a four-year program, Loke notes). The course was also too well shaded. Loke has had 500 trees removed. As a result, "we have grass growing where grass has never grown before," he says. "That was kind of the obvious stuff."

The irrigation system is still being renovated. It now has a Toro closed hydraulic system with Toro AT4 controllers. The pump house is being rebuilt, with flow meters added to control larger pumps and improve watering efficiency. He hopes to have the system completed this year.

Each hole now has 100-, 150- and 200-yard markers. In 1985, 10,000 feet of cart paths were asphalted. Unfortunately, because of the water properties of clay under the paths, the base was insufficient to keep the paths from cracking when the clay expanded and contracted as it moistened and dried. Plans call for the paths to be resurfaced this year, with a proper base. Loke notes that they are still trying to determine what the proper base will be.

Needless to say, the course has taken a lot of work. Loke credits assistant, Dan Nagy, a 25-year-old Ohio State graduate who has worked at Quail Hollow for seven years, with excellent help.

He has the course now where "over several months, we are able to get the course in tournament shape." Which is a far cry from where it was 10 years ago, when it was several months away from playable. **LM**