

GOLF 'SCAPING

Sand replacement, weather or not...

Off-season jobs can be complicated by inclement weather. This project at Terrace Park went as planned during a break in January's bitter cold.

■ If you travel Ohio much in winter, you've felt the widely ranging temperatures between the state's northern and southern halves. If it's 32 degrees in Cleveland, it may be 40 or higher in Cincinnati. Usually.

But this has been a most *unusual* winter—with record cold north and south—and it made Rick Grote's latest project at Terrace Park Country Club near Cincinnati tougher than he thought it would be.

The project: new sand in each of the course's 42 bunkers.

"We knew two or three years ago this project was going to come about," says Grote. "The members didn't care for the sand we had (crushed limestone); they wanted a looser, silica-type sand."

Never-say-die guy that he is, Grote turned the cold mid-January weather into a positive.

"This kind of job is easier in winter anyway, when the ground is frozen," he says. "We don't have the problem of wet sand, and the snow helps pack the sand down. By April it'll be playable, with no more 'fried eggs' (buried golf balls); and you won't be able to putt out of the sand."

In less than a week's time, Grote and crew—Karl, Joe, Gene, Doug and Mike—replaced the old crushed limestone with 850 tons of higher quality, silica sand.

The truck used to transport and spread the sand—called a "floater" due to the large flotation tires—was assembled by the R.K. Hydro Vac company of Covington, Ohio. A high-speed conveyor boom propels



The swinging conveyor used for this job can fill a bunker in about 10 minutes. The tires exert a mere 9 psi of pressure on the turf.

the sand at distances of up to 35 feet. Driver Jim Hart says the R.K. Hydro Vac company sanded the tire treads down to make these heavyweight jobs possible.

"It's a hell of a lot easier with the Hydro Vac, rather than rutting up the course with dump trucks and utility vehicles," says Grote. There's also less back-and-forth for refills, which can make it a monotonous, time-consuming job.

Neighboring superintendents visited the course throughout the week to view the job's progress.

Project cost—This job wasn't cheap. The 900 tons of silica sand was the big-ticket item: \$30 a ton, delivered.

The Hydro Vac rented for \$4000 a week, including driver wages. A week's use of a Case front end loader cost \$1600.

Grote planned well in advance to secure the funds needed for the job.

"We try to have at least a five-year plan on capital expenditures. That way, it's easier to get the money because the club

planned for it. Members can only take so many surprises every year."

Around the course—Terrace Park has bentgrass greens, tees and fairways. Greens are mowed at 1/8 inches with a Toro Triplex.

But Grote always tries to minimize heavy equipment traffic on greens. Turf groomers are used about twice a week. Rollers are used sparingly; Grote doesn't want to encourage compaction-related problems.

Grote believes Scott's growth regulator, Enhance, helps keep greens fast without having to use equipment as often. It slows turf growth down for about three weeks, he says.

"We topdress only after we aerify, and once or twice during the summer to fill in unhealed ball marks or to slick the greens up a bit," he notes.

Grote often makes test plots available for control product testing. Recently, Monsanto tested its new Vantage, for



Rick Grote: Keeps a 'clean' course, plans well ahead for expensive projects.

nutsedge control, at the course.

Grote's next project might be cart paths; but he's not sure.

"A lot of the members like to walk, the course" he explains, "and there's not a lot of room for cart paths," because of Terrace Park's narrow layout.

Grote's a busy man; he's currently on the board of the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation.

Terrace Park was built in 1931, and is situated along a busy ribbon of winding road in Milford, Ohio, about 15 miles east of Cincinnati.

—Terry McIver

Computers a worthwhile adventure in trial and error, say these superintendents

■ We all know by now that a computer can make your life easier. It's just a matter of admitting that you need one—and granted, you might not need one...yet—and then taking the plunge.

"I don't think there is a low to medium budget golf course that would not be receptive to a \$1000-\$3000 expense to buy a computer," says **John Carlone, CGCS**, of the Middle Bay Country Club, located in Oceanside, N.Y.

"We're in the information age, and we need a way to manage that information," says Carlone, whose computer skills progressed slowly, to a point where he's now comfortable enough about the subject to give a speech to his peers. Carlone told his story of computer enlightenment to superintendents at the recent GCSAA International Show in Dallas.

Payroll, irrigation scheduling, budgeting, landscape management, it's all possible with a good computer system.

To narrow his learning curve, Carlone turned to a colleague more skilled in computer science, superintendent Duane Patton at Lawrence Country Club in Lawrence, Kans.

Patton visited Carlone twice to lend a hand.

Carlone says having someone help with initial computer training is "the most valu-

able thing you can do. Trying to teach yourself can be very frustrating, not knowing where to start or where to go for help. My computer was off for a number of months before I had someone come in and teach me."

A good reference book helps, too. Carlone's computer bible is "*DOS for Dummies*." (DOS stands for disk operating system); he'll page through it at any spare moment.

Corey Haney, super at Bristow Manor Golf Course, Arlington, Va says computers are not a cure-all, but they are helpful business tools.



Carlone: Hire a tutor for computer help

"They're not going to solve all your problems but they're certainly going to help you with any you have now," he promises.

Haney says computers are "nothing more than electronic replacements

for tools we use everyday.

"The computer can process and store large quantities of information, and help



you use it in different ways; it can also help you make decisions."

What's right for you may not be right for the super down the road, but Haney believes the common computer denominator is how it improves efficiency.

Word processing is "an electronic typewriter, no more or less. Newsletters can be written to communicate with the golfers, and help explain course projects. Spread sheets can be used for budget calculations, cost per acre, annual costs, all faster, neater and more professional.

"(Computer skills) could certainly become a career requirement," says Haney—and the superintendent who ignores the technology might be overlooked for someone who can operate even a most basic system.

"The popularity of golf has led to what seem like longer seasons," says Haney. "We have tougher conditions and more demanding golfers. Computers will reduce the time we spend indoors."

—Terry McIver