



Scotland

ON LAKE ERIE

BY RON HALL/ Managing Editor

A flat stretch of shoreline on the far western end of Lake Erie contains a 180-acre slice of Scotland. It's the Maumee Bay State Park Resort Golf Course, east along the shoreline of the busy port city of Toledo, Ohio.

The most distinguishing feature of the course designed by Toledo native and respected golf course architect Arthur Hills, is what it doesn't have—trees. It has none.

What it does have—and plenty of them—are grass-covered, man-made mounds and dunes. Many have sand bunkers tucked in behind them. And it has ponds.

When a blustery Nor'easter churns shallow Lake Erie, the storm-driven rain roils the ponds, bends the course's tall grasses flat, and lashes the narrow, rolling fairways as mercilessly as any storm off the North Sea.

Fortunately for the continued improvement of the 18-hole Maumee Bay course, it has an experienced superintendent, Bruce Dodenhoff, who is tickled to be a part of the course's, indeed the park's, growing popularity.

Superintendent Bruce Dodenhoff enjoys the challenge of putting the finishing touches on the "links-style" Maumee Bay State Park golf course.

And, while Dodenhoff says he's no fan of the location's "Scottish Links weather", particularly each fall and what's sometimes referred to as spring in Northwest Ohio, he's happy as can be to be tending the Scottish Links-style course. Particularly, the "no trees" part.

After years caring for more traditional northern courses, including nearby Brandywine Country Club, Dodenhoff says it's mighty nice for him and his staff (11 in season; 4, including himself, in winter) to be able to focus so completely on grass.

"There are a lot of advantages to not having trees on a golf course," says Dodenhoff who, as the sec-



Cooperation among Park Manager Jim Browsers, left, Dodenhoff, and Golf Pro Brad Calloway, right, is crucial to the successful operation of the Maumee Bay State Park GC.

ond superintendent at the state resort, is entrusted with "finishing off" off the 6-year-old course.

"Without trees, of course, we don't have tree roots growing into the fairways or the tees. We don't have to trim around trees when we mow. We don't have leaf cleanup. And, we have nothing to stop the wind here," says Dodenhoff. The wind, however, is both a blessing and a curse.

On the negative side, says Dodenhoff, the wind creates waves on the course's 10 holding ponds (nine of them come into play). The waves erode the ponds' clay banks in spite of attempts to establish protective wetlands plants there.

To remedy this, the state park installed a 15,000 gallon-per-minute pump to lower pond water levels whenever they get too high. Dodenhoff's crew also has been collecting big pieces of driftwood that wash up on the park's beach. They're staked in the water in front of eroding pond banks. The driftwood buffers the banks against wave action and, hopefully, will give wetlands plants a chance to dig in, says Dodenhoff.

But, the wind, which generally blows from the northwest, brings benefits too. Dodenhoff says that the wind lessens the occurrence and severity of turfgrass diseases. So far the biggest disease problem has been sporadic incidences of dollar spot. "But, I have to see it coming up a little bit before we'll spray," he says.

(The same goes for control of insect pests. He used Oftanol to knock down a problem with black atenius two summers ago. Last summer, the course experienced some damage from cutworms but the superintendent decided not to treat.)

The almost-constant wind, combined with excellent drainage on most of the course, makes it playable even after heavy rains. When officials visited Maumee Bay to determine its suitability as a qualifying course for the 1997 U.S. Open, Dodenhoff told them if it should rain hard enough to cause unplayable conditions "you guys aren't going to want to be playing anyway." They selected the course.

"Out on the course there is no shade. It's usually windy and when the conditions are dry, you can have a two-hour shower at night, and by the next afternoon, the course can be totally dry," the superintendent says.

Plenty of water

A modified, double-row Toro system irrigates the course's Pennway tees (3 acres) and fairways (28 acres), and Penncross greens (4 acres). Three pumps draw water from the retention ponds which are, themselves, supplied by nearby Lake Erie. "Usually the lake level is higher than the ponds and if we need water, we just have to open a gate," says Dodenhoff.

In finishing off the course, Dodenhoff says he and his crew have made progress in ridding the course, particularly the tops of dunes, of Canadian thistle with a program of spot treatment. To encourage root growth and seedhead formation of tall grasses which replace the thistle, he's been applying an all mineral 8-32-16 analysis at 1.5 pounds of phosphorus per 1000 square feet.

"The seedheads of these grasses are what give us the look we want, the Scottish links look," says the superintendent who got his formal turf training at Ohio State's ATI campus in Wooster, Ohio.

Pheasants and other wildlife

Conditions at the course lend themselves to wildlife enhancement. Man-made nesting boxes attracted colorful wood ducks to ponds on the course this past spring. And, the organization known as Pheasants Forever began creating suitable pheasant habitat in an adjacent 30 acres of the park.

This particular corner of Ohio, with much of its wetlands remaining in the form of hunting, and state and national wildlife preserves, has long been known as

one of the nation's top waterfowling locations. It remains a major migratory route for ducks, geese, songbirds and, even, monarch butterflies.

Dodenhoff acknowledges that being a superintendent at a state resort golf course is different from what he's experienced as a superintendent elsewhere.

His fulltime crew members are unionized. This has its advantages, he insists. They're paid well and have good benefits (at least compared to private courses), and there's little turnover. Also he has no



Superintendent Bruce Dodenhoff likes the links-style course but not the links-type weather.

greens committee to answer to. His immediate supervisor is Park Manager Jim Browers, who was at the park long before the golf course or its adjoining resort lodge and cabins were built.

Dodenhoff and his golf course crew know that they answer to all Ohio golfers. The park and the golf course are public facilities. The park was financed by revenue-producing bonds, not taxes.

"I try to remind my crew that we're building our security by improving this course," he says.

"If the public is happy with what we're doing, we're going to be here." □