

Great, green grow-in

Superintendent Clay Putnam didn't spare the water, fertilizer or topdressing in preparing the greens at Harborside International, one of Chicago's newest public golf jewels.

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor

The grow-in of putting greens often doesn't go as smoothly as a superintendent would like. But Clay Putnam says he'd use pretty much the same script he followed at a new public golf course just southeast of Chicago.

"We were happy with the way the greens on the golf course grew in," says Putnam. He credits a well-planned schedule of fertilization, watering and topdressing for the greens' favorable start.

Putnam works for Serviscape which manages the upscale, new public Harborside International course. (The owner and president of Serviscape, Michigan City, IN, is Pete Sinnott, former superintendent at Firestone in Akron, Ohio.) Harborside International is a two-year-old, 36-hole course bordering Lake Calumet. In fact, it's built on what was once part of Lake Calumet. For many years, until 1972, the site served as a landfill for sanitary wastes and concrete rubble. The Illinois International Port District owns property.

The Port District is self sufficient and does not receive public funds and couldn't afford to let the land sit idle. There was some discussion about using the land as a site for Chicago's third major airport. Then somebody proposed America's largest shopping center there. The Port Authority opted for a public golf course. But not just any course; it wanted one to compete with Chicago's other top public courses.

The work begins

Dick Nugent got the contract to design the course and Ryan, Inc., Janesville, WI, built it. Ryan started the course in June 1993 by adding two feet of impermeable clay to cap the sludge at the site. Then workmen shaped the course in the "links" tradition, using mostly, material already on site.

The site of a landfill until 1972, this new links-style golf course on Lake Calumet just southeast of Chicago now generates revenue for the Illinois International Port District.

Ryan built the greens to USGA specifications but without the "choker" layer. This was mainly to save money. It spread a four-inch layer of pea gravel over the drainage, then a 14-inch layer of 80/20 mix. The top mix had to meet exacting particle size specifications, says Putnam.

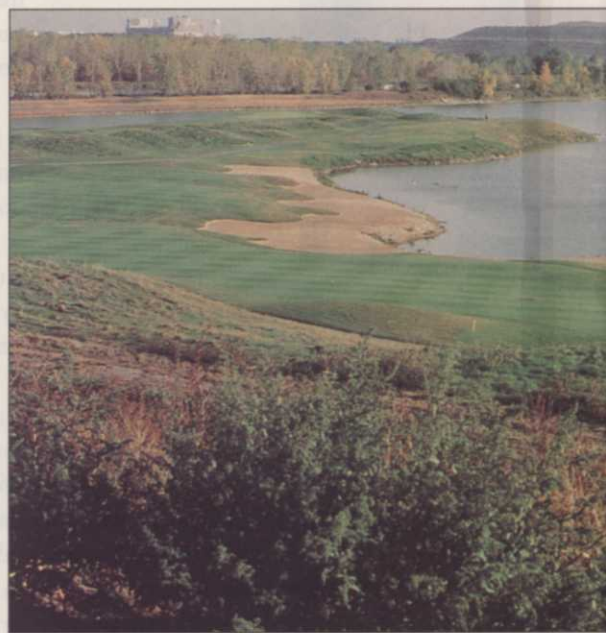
The contractor then raked in the pre-seeding fertilizer—25 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. of 18-46-0 super phosphate, 25 lbs. of 0-0-50, and 45 lbs. of Milorganite—and seeded each green with 1 ½ lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. of Pennlinks creeping bentgrass. It seeded in two passes at half rates going in different directions for better coverage.

"Once each green was dimpled in, Ryan handed it over to us and we immediately turned on the water," says Putnam. "It took us a while to figure out what our water cycles were going to be. We did our best not to flood the greens."

Seeding began the first week of September in 1994 which turned out to be unusually warm. The



Putnam works to make Harborside International one of Chicago's finer public golf courses.





Once the greens had a good stand, Putnam switched to deeper but less frequent irrigation, one 15-to-20 minute watering late each morning with additional syringing as needed.

Harborside crew achieved germination in three to five days by running four-minute irrigation cycles every two hours in the morning and hourly cycles in the hot afternoons. Once the greens had a good stand, Putnam switched to deeper but less frequent irrigation, one 15-to-20 minute watering late each morning with additional syringing as conditions required.

The infant greens' first taste of additional nitrogen came from one lb. of Sustane 10-2-10 which Putnam selected be-

cause it wouldn't burn the plants. Then, through mid October, the greens received a weekly application of one lb. of 18-4-10 greens-grade material with a final application of two lbs. of Milorganite in December carrying the greens through winter.

Mowing four weeks later

Putnam began mowing the greens and tees at Harborside about four weeks after germination. Workers used Toro GM 100 walking mowers at a ¼-inch cutting height. When his crew resumed mowing in April 1995, Putnam started at this height. He began lowering the height and increasing mowing frequency eight weeks before the course's scheduled opening on July 1, 1995. By two weeks prior to opening the greens were down to 135/1000ths, where they remained throughout the '95 season.

"Pennlinks did quite well at that height," says Putnam. "We were able to maintain our green speed at 9 and 9 ½ throughout the golf course."

Putnam started topdressing the greens shortly after their first mowing. He started with a weekly topdressing of ½th inch

Construction on Harborside International began in June 1993 and in September 1994 Putnam began seeding the greens. The course opened July 1, 1995 to good reviews.

with the final pass before winter applying 3/16th inch. When the grass began growing again in mid April 1995, he began topdressing again.

"We topdressed pretty heavily until the greens were down to 135th. We did it for three reasons, to make the greens smoother, to help keep thatch in check, and to protect the turfgrass plants as we lowered the height of cut," explains Clay Putnam.

The Harborside crew dragged the greens very carefully, back and forth and not in the conventional circle pattern. Workers then hand-brushed the excess sand from the edges of the greens. "Lightly is the key word," says Putnam.

Even with the best-laid plans, not everything goes perfectly, recognizes Putnam.

Seed early rather than late

Greens seeded in September grew in better than those seeded later in the season. Also, a few broken O-rings on sprinkler heads, and the activities of "quite a few dogs" necessitated the use of some washed sod.

Favorable weather in the fall of 1994 and an application of Subdue fungicide soon after seeding forestalled any initial disease problems. Before putting Evergreen covers over the greens for the winter, Putnam's crew applied Chipco and Daconil. Even so, periodic checks under the covers discovered some grey snow mold in February 1995, prompting an application of Scotts Fungicide IX

Also, Mother Nature, specifically the wind, wasn't always kind to the greens covers during that winter of 1994/1995. "On more than one occasion we had to fish a cover out of Lake Calumet," says Putnam.

None of these problems were serious though, he adds.

"We were very pleased with the results. But the satisfaction of the golfers on the course was the test that really mattered." □

