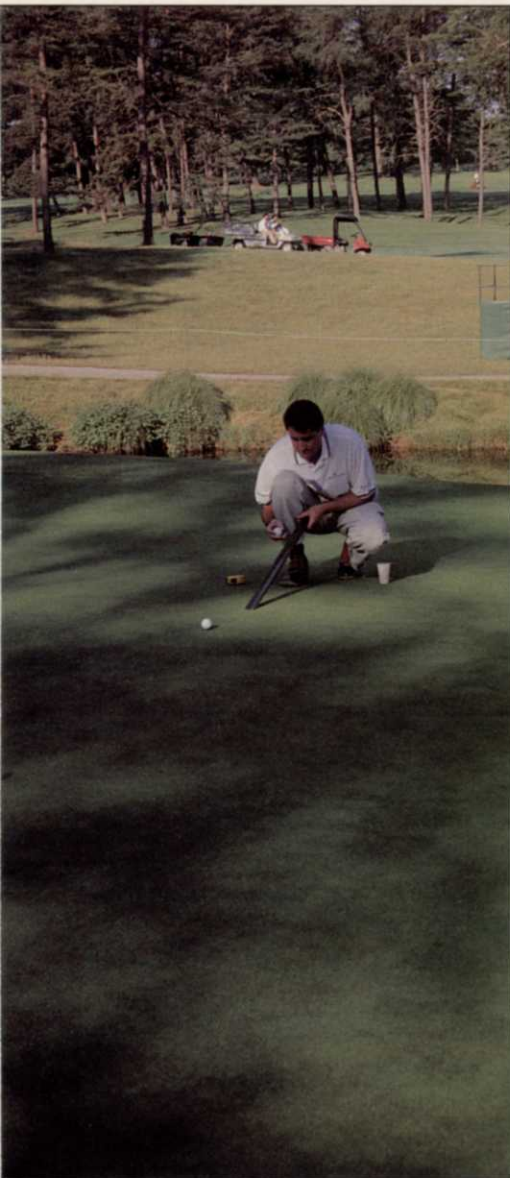


Reunion at Paul's

When Paul Latshaw, Sr. needed a crew for the U.S. Open, he recruited some past employees to help him out.

by TERRY McIVER, Editor-in-Chief



The green speed goal was to keep stimpmeter readings within six inches of each other. "We hit a few low 13s," says Darren Davis.

As is the tradition in the ranks of U.S. Open superintendents, the man in charge gets to bring in whatever help he needs to prepare for and get through the most rigorous four days of golf course maintenance.

This year Paul Latshaw, Sr., combined a little nostalgia with a lot of the work, by having a number of his past assistants join him for the long days at Congressional.

Latshaw's help for the 1997 U.S. Open Championship came from far and wide. Some were sales reps from green industry suppliers. Others were superintendents and their assistants. Mechanics got into the act too. Four friends flew in from Australia, one from Thailand.

Lots of courses were represented. Augusta National. Pebble Beach. Olde Florida. Caves Valley. The Farm of Georgia. The Country Club of Cleveland.

There were 72 helpers in all, estimates wife Phyllis. Those who used to work alongside Latshaw were happy to lend a hand to a man who is a role model for many of today's best superintendents.

Steve Glossinger brought his entire bunker crew down from Caves Valley Golf Club, Owings Mills, Md., located about an hour's drive from Congressional.

"Of course, at 3:30 in the morning, the traffic's not too bad," laughs Glossinger, who has known Latshaw for quite a few years.

The Open's great bunkers

"He's kind of responsible for me moving out here," says Glossinger, who managed Oakland Hills before moving to Caves Valley, and hosting the Open there in 1996.

"Paul came out to Oakland Hills last year and liked what he saw. He was impressed with the way we manage our bunkers."

Glossinger and 12 crewmen began their daily treks to Congressional a week prior to the four-day event, to groom and prep the brand new course bunkers. They continued on for the week of the championship.

"Being the host of a major tournament myself, I knew Paul would be looking for help," says Glossinger, who has managed to keep in his employ a solid nucleus of bunker specialists.

"I've had a group of fellows with me now for almost 10 years, when I was the superintendent of Point of Woods," he explains. "There, we hosted the Western Amateur every year. I took them to Oakland Hills, and when I left Oakland Hills, I brought them here.

"We put bunker maintenance at the same level of green maintenance," says Glossinger. "My guys are very detailed, very proud of what they do. Members and guests from all over the country, at every course I've worked, have always complimented our bunkers.

"Bunkers are a work of art. To keep them maintained properly is



Paul Latshaw: his course management initiatives include really short greens and walk-behind mowers on fairways.

very important to us. We worked on Robert Trent Jones bunkers at Point of Woods; Robert Trent Jones and Donald Ross bunkers at Oakland Hills, and now we're working on Tom Fazio bunkers at Caves Valley. We always keep the [architect's design] in mind. The architects want nothing better than to keep these things picture perfect. We take it to the next level."

Green speed a blur

Darren Davis, of Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples, was in charge of stimpmeter readings.

"I really enjoyed it," says Davis, who went to Penn State turf school with Paul Latshaw, Jr., who manages Merion.

"Since then, Junior and I have stayed good friends, but I got to know his father a lot better."

Davis took stimp readings on each Congressional green, after the morning and afternoon cuts.

"We based our decision for the next morning's cut on the afternoon stimpmeter reading," explains Davis. "From Thursday on, the greens were never [stimping] less than 12 feet. The average was about 12.5 We hit a 13.1 and 13.2."

Davis says he's got some great assistants at Olde Florida, which meant he could be away for 11 days with no worry about how things were going back at his home course.

"I run three interns through Olde Florida every year," says Davis, "and I always hire my assistants from the ranks of former interns. In five years, I've had six guys that have come through who are now superintendents. We turn out some pretty good guys here."

Water management

Matt Shaffer worked under Latshaw for two years at Augusta National. He now manages the Country Club of Cleveland, Pepper Pike, Ohio, but came down to help out with greens and water management.

"He taught me a lot, and we created a lifetime friendship, which is more valuable for me than the things he's taught me," says Shaffer. "Paul is always



Steve Glossinger hosted the Open at Oakland Hills in '96. He knew what Latshaw wanted out of his bunker crew.

leading edge. He was the first person to cut fairways by hand, the first person to probably aerify fairways with walk-behind aerifiers at Oakmont, and I'm sure he was one of the first people to really cut greens to low heights.

"So you would think he would be set in his ways, but he's not," says Shaffer. "His staff is second to none. It's like a dream come true to have that many qualified people working as one unit."

Revived course

Shaffer was most impressed by the change Latshaw has brought about at Congressional, a course that had some serious problems five years ago.

"You had to see have seen the place when Paul inherited it," Shaffer recalls.

"They had some nasty soil origin problems. They had done a lot of reconstruction there, and they took a lot of the topsoil off the fairways to build mounds, and left a lot of the subsoil there to grow fine turf on. And there was some herbicide residue in the fairways. Seed would establish, but a couple weeks into maturity, as soon as the root would get into the herbicide, it would die off.

"Regardless of the phenomenal job they did for preparation of the Open, the biggest accomplishment took place five years prior, getting a thick grass stand to the point where it would tolerate the beating you need to give it to get it into condition for the tournament," says Shaffer.

"Paul's a great leader," says Kevin Crowe, assistant superintendent in training at Augusta National.

"Everybody was more than happy to be there as early as he wanted us, and stay as late as needed."

In the morning, Crowe helped out with fairway mowing, which began at 5:45 a.m. Five-man teams were responsible for three fairways each. Crowe then pitched in on a variety of tasks, from moving fans, to rolling greens, to filling fairway divots. □