



Super puts the pieces together for grow-in

Sand Ridge opens soon in Chardon, Ohio.

Superintendent John Zimmers has been active in the project from the first day.

by TERRY MCIVER / Editor-in-chief

John Zimmers prepares for Sand Ridge Golf Club's grand opening on June 1, and he says being on-site during the process has helped him learn the layout, save money, and spot potential problems early.

"I've learned a lot, and I wouldn't want to do a grow-in unless I could be there at the very beginning," says Zimmers of his first grow-in. "You avoid a lot of problems if you're there at the beginning."

Having a super on-site during a grow-in is vital if the site is environmentally sensitive.

"If you have a sensitive site, one that contains wetlands, (the superintendent) has to be there to oversee the construction. But it's worth it, because if that dozer operator makes

one mistake, it could be over," as far as violation of federal or local wetlands protection mandates, says Zimmers.

"Federal and local authorities *will* come and inspect," he adds, "and if you have good rapport with them and show them you're doing things with positive intent, things will work out. People have the misperception that they're 'out to get you,' but that's not the case."

Zimmers says he's seeking Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary status for Sand Ridge.

A veritable beach

The soil profile at Sand Ridge does indeed contain sand, but not until you get through about eight feet of heavy clay loam. But there's plenty of the white stuff visible on the surface.

Sand is a key factor in the

design of the course. That's not surprising in that the course was built by the Best Sand company, which has its quarry right next door.

"I think we have over 10,000 tons of sand out here," says Zimmers. "It's quite a different look, especially being in northern Ohio."

Two grades of sand are used for bunkers, a '530' and a '535'.

The greens were built of an 80-10-10 sand/topsoil/peat mix that meets USGA specs. "We took Best Sand's sand, mixed it with topsoil from behind the 14th fairway; shredded it and put in a little bit of the Dakota peat," says Zimmers.

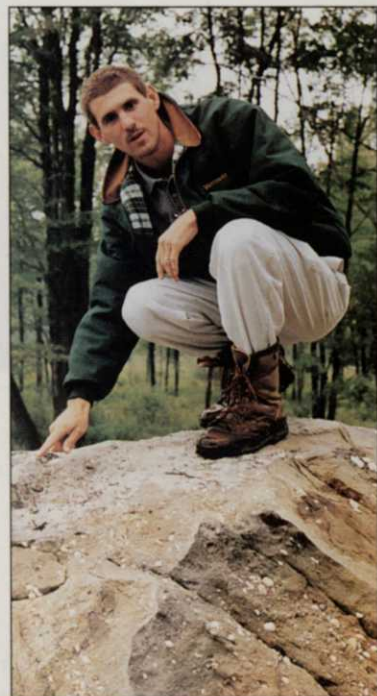
Fertigation for carbohydrate load

Zimmers used the course's state-of-the-art fertigation system to add a sugar/molasses product (Carbo-Aid 3-1-3 from AquAid) to feed the turf.

"We fed the soil with carbohydrates to some

microbial activity, since we disturbed the soil so much during construction."

"The fertigation system gets the carbohydrates out to the turfgrass. Then we use granular organics (Sustane and Nature



Zimmers and his crew unearthed this boulder while building the 12th green. All that was exposed before excavation was a two-foot corner.



With weather radar, Zimmers 'stays ahead' of coming storm fronts. People on the course are safer, and products aren't wasted.

Safe). We used a United Horticultural Supply product (Gro-ganic) for the pre-planting preparation."

The fertigation pump pre-mixes control products.

'Flex-design' works

The scenery at Sand Ridge shifts dramatically from heavily-wooded areas to open ground.

"This is a golf club, and the members are here for one reason--to golf. Tom Fazio designed the course. One of the criteria was to have a 'world

"We're not going to do anything crazy the first year. We want strong, healthy turf."

class' facility," says Zimmers.

"You just can't say enough about Tom Fazio and his two associates, Tom Marzsof and Rick Horger," he adds.

"They're just a delight to work with. They stood out here, drew a picture, handed it to the shaper, and said, 'build that.'"

Although they worked from

a detailed plan, they modified it in the field when the terrain suggested a better option.

"Our original plan showed the 16th hole to have two greens; it doesn't have that now," explains Zimmers.

"The 5th hole was supposed to have a lake, and we pulled the lake out and put two greens there."

Low stimpis to start

Zimmers won't push the greens speed too soon.

"I think if they stimp around 8 for opening day, I think that's a realistic goal considering that they're so young. Too much emphasis is put on green speeds right away. If they're consistent and we have healthy turf, I think we've done our

job. The rest of the things will work themselves out."

Greens will probably be cut at $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

The course is seeded entirely with bentgrass (L-93 for greens; a 50-50 mix of L-93 and Southshore for fairways and tees); roughs are primarily Baron and Preakness bluegrass.

Sand Ridge sides

Smart storage...Zimmers and assistant Jim Roney designed the Sand Ridge chemical storage building, which includes a concrete pit fitted with a drainage pipe to collect spillage into a holding tank. The runoff is later sprayed into rough areas.

All sinks are piped to the pit, and are fitted with easy-to-clean, stainless steel filters.

Every storage building has an emergency alert system and a fire alarm. If you need help, you sound the alarm and someone comes running.

The course has its own sewage treatment plant that recycles water back into the irrigation system.

Turf nursery...John Zimmers relies on a turf nursery for extra sod, and as a training ground.

"Before anybody does anything on the golf course, we bring them over and teach them how cut, spray, and fertilize. We don't want to take a chance on anybody making a bigger error on the course. This has saved a lot of grief. If there's a mistake to be made, it's better to have it made here than out there."

On being a super..."Every day is different. And it certainly is a challenge. Whether it's rain, heat, or equipment. I don't think you're ever done with your job, and you're always trying to make improvements some where."

"I think the key to this business is to be flexible and work hard. And you have to be able to deal with the weather and the people. You're only as good as the people you have."

"Alan Mark and Dr. Rich Hurley (of Lofts Seed) have done a great job of servicing us," says Zimmers. "Before we were even planting grass, they took a great interest in the project and gave us some great insight, to make sure we have the right grass in the right place."

Zimmers also credits Bob Brame, director of the USGA's North-Central region for his help with greens specs.

"On greens, tees and fairways we used $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb./1000 sq. ft. seed rate, and seeded in two different directions: $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. in one direction, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. at right angles. We've seeded all of our greens and tees ourselves with walk-behind drop spreaders and then we ran a Sand Pro and dimpled it in. The tires dimpled it in.

That was a great turning point. We saw tremendous results with that dimpling.

"I wasn't a true believer till I tried it. It was remarkable."

During the seeding, Zimmers maintained consistent seeding patterns by having one man (John Krebes) be responsible for the project.

Zimmers gives extra credit to Jim Roney (last with Merion Golf Club) for his help during the entire grow-in.

"He's put a lot of long, hard, dedicated hours in," says Zimmers, who gives still more credit to his wife, Tracey, who endures his long days at the course. **LM**