

Hartefeld boss adjusts turf height, saves water

Nutrition \$\$ a high priority

Kelch believes there is only one way to grow grass, and that is to fertilize. "For the first year I didn't put down enough. It seems that when you do a grow-in, I honestly don't think you can put down enough fertilizer. You need to grow the grass and grow it quickly so you can cover your ground. If I had to do it all over again, I'd put down a lot more fertilizer than I did at the beginning if I could possibly do it."

In the event of heavy rains, which can cause washouts, a dynamic fertilization plans helps reduce the potential for erosion damage if the grass can quickly grow.

Washouts caused ruts more than two feet deep, and the need for what was very nearly like a second grow in.

Kelch had about \$30,000 for fertilizer in 1997.

"I'm fertilizing probably 40 acres of rough, 4 acres of tees and greens and 27 acres of fairways. The rough takes a lot.

"I treat that the same as the rest of the golf course."

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By JOHN B. CALSIN, JR.

In three years a design team, construction company and grounds crew have transformed once rolling farm land into a top daily fee course, Hartefeld National, Avondale, Pa.

The 7000-yard course designed by Tom Fazio, is the new home for the Bell Atlantic Senior PGA Tour event.

Bill Kelch, CGCS, says the site "was just corn fields and dirt" when he arrived. Yet, only about 300,000 cubic yards of dirt were moved for the entire course.

Kelch thinks the experience of seeing a new course evolve and grow in is "pretty unbelievable."

Water schedules moderate

"We do a lot of hand-syringing here," says Kelch. "It's hands and hoses. It's time consuming. It's hard. But it's the way it should be done. If the grass doesn't need water, it shouldn't have water."

When conditions warrant irrigation, however, Kelch says to put the water down deep. But he stresses it is "infrequent."

They try to go at least 10 to 14 days and longer, if possible, between watering. About 50 minutes worth of water, about an inch, is put down.

Number 10 was a problem hole. Before the construction of houses that have begun to ring the course and particularly this

hole, there were a lot of trees. There was little air circulation because the hole is in a hollow.

During the grow-in and after, there were such problems with the green they had to put in fans there. Kelch tells the story that one day he paid a visit to the green and found course owner Davis Sezna playing the hole.

"Do you smell that?" asked Kelch.

"Yes," said Sezna.

"That's not the compost pile across the street," said Kelch. "This green is rotting."

"Go buy those fans now," said Sezna.

Fans were brought in, and for the first year, the green was babied.



Kelch shows the filter fabric liner at hole 17 that has become exposed due to raking. It's tough to keep the grass wet and growing over the liner, says Kelch. The liners will be removed before the Bell Atlantic tourney.



The fans at number 10 green circulate air and reduce chance for disease. Trees were reduced by 20 percent around this green. Fans by Paterson Fan Co., Blythewood, SC.

"We cut it every other day," says Kelch. "We applied fungicides to it a little bit more, fertilized it a little bit more, and it came back. Now that the trees are cleared out, and we have the fans running between midnight and six or seven in the morning, it keeps the air circulating, and it is cooler down there."

Mowing height lowered slowly

"We found the best way to grow in the fairways was to let it grow up high," says Kelch. We actually push-mowed our fairways for a little over a month. Then we got the little 72-inch National out there, and we started at $\frac{3}{8}$ ". We lowered that down, and finally went into the triplex at $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Greens are grown with Southshore and Crenshaw. Fairways and tees are ryegrass and roughs are bluegrass.

The herbicide/fungicide budget is "probably close to other high-end daily fee courses, but I try to stretch it out," says



The bunkers and gnarly fescue rough on number 5 make for a tough approach.

Grounds crew gets the credit

Bill Kelch never stops thanking his grounds crew for the work they do.

"They're the guys that have really made this course shine," claims Kelch. "I oversee what they do, but they do all the grunt work. The grounds crew is really the unsung hero of making this golf course aesthetically pleasing to golfers."

Kelch has a crew of 17, three of whom are managers. Six are employed year-round.

His assistant is Steve Edkin. John Long is second assistant, and the mechanic is Jim D'Orazio, who has his hands full of expensive, quality machinery.

"Right now I have 15 Cushmans; 2 five-plex mowers; 3 triplexes; three 26-inch T-mowers; 8 greens mowers; six trailers; core aerifiers and a host of other little machinery. That is the main concern for me, to get the golf course cut," says Kelch.

"I still like to get my hands dirty," says Kelch. "I don't like to sit behind a desk. I do have a second assistant, but if you're going to be a manager, you got to be a manager. If you're going to be a superintendent, you have to be a superintendent."

Kelch talks about the importance of getting out and seeing what's going on.

"You have to get out and walk the course, take a look at it. Take early morning walks around, look for disease. And I still syringe the greens."

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Kelch, who plans in two-week cycles which helps the owners balance the funds.

By "playing the weather," Kelch says he needed one application against *Pythium* in 1997, which probably saved him \$15,000.

Hartefeld has sand-based greens that are an 85/15 sand/peat mix.

"It's 12-inches of sand and four inches of pea gravel, and there is herringbone drainage all through every green, so these greens drain well," says Kelch.

Photos by John B. Calsin, Jr.