

Restoring

Pasatiempo's glory

Superintendent Dean Gump is working on a plan to restore the rich heritage of this MacKenzie-designed golf course on Monterey Bay.

By BRIDGET FALBO



Superintendent Dean Gump must schedule restorative work as well as maintenance for Pasatiempo that, if conditions allow, can be open 365 days a year.

The legendary Alister MacKenzie designed a golf course in the Santa Cruz Mountains on Monterey Bay in California. Golf greats Bobby Jones, Ben Hogan and Babe Didrickson played here. So did celebrities like Ty Cobb, Jack Dempsey and Bing Crosby. Built in 1929, Pasatiempo has hosted its share of prestigious tournaments too, like the 1986 U. S. Women's Amateur Championship.

With that kind of heritage, no wonder Superintendent Dean Gump feels like he's got his work cut out for him. Not only must he maintain the course

in excellent playing condition in spite of about 55,000 rounds annually, but he's committed to preserving and, in some cases, restoring its rich history.

He's restoring the bunkers on certain holes to their original design. He and architect Tom Doak are looking back over old photographs to reference their efforts. Luckily, many pictures exist of the early years of the course.

Pasatiempo is a long, narrow course built on 90 acres of rolling hills with eye-catching views of the Monterey Bay. Because it's so heavily bunkered, players must approach each hole with a plan. Oak and Monterey pine separate the undulating fairways with the 395-yard 16th hole recognized as designer MacKenzie's favorite par four hole in spite (or maybe because of) its blind drive from the tee.

In describing the narrowness of the fairways, Gump says a course would never be built like this these days because of safety issues. Although not envisioned in the original design, the tree placement helps protect players from errant golf balls crossing into the next fairway. Gump must meet a fine line of trimming, thinning and planting so the trees do not overshadow and block the fairways, but offer protection and beauty for the golfers.

The goal of the renovation project is to restore the course as closely as possible to Alister MacKenzie's original design. But that's not going to be easy. While the polite description of Pasatiempo would be "old, classic course," it's in constant need of lots of tender loving maintenance.

"With a course of this age we're to the point of the whole infrastructure starting to break down," says Gump. "With an older golf course, you've got a lot of deterioration going on. For instance, the cart paths are deteriorating and old drains that have been there for years are failing."

Some major improvements have helped the course cope. For instance, 1989 saw the installation of an irrigation system. More recently, it has been computerized. This was a big step in improving the course, says Gump. It greatly improved the course's

water management and substantially cut the course's water bill.

Gump is working with architect Doak on a master restoration that will include cart path improvements, more tree removal to open up fairways and greens, and bunkering improvements.

Because the bunkers have changed dramatically in the last 60 years, both in size and shape, renovating them is an ongoing project. Gump recently finished restoring bunkers on the 12th and 13th greens. The next challenge is to rebuild the first tee and restore the bunkers on Holes 1 and 9.

"It takes a lot of hand work," says Gump. The restoration requires ripping up and then relaying sod after the shaper is done, upgrading the drainage and filling the newly positioned bunker with sand.

Too much water

Since it is an old course, Gump says one of the main challenges is drainage. The climate of this coastal region provides a long, dry summer, but a very rainy winter season. On average, the course receives 40 inches of rain per year, but in this past year of the El Niño it received 70 inches.

To improve drainage, for the past nine years Gump has been constructing sand channel drainage systems on tees and greens, and is now turning to the fairways. The system consists of a series of nine-inch deep, one-inch wide sand columns in a grid system 24 inches apart. Placed under the sand columns is a high-flow, one-inch drain pipe with slits which captures the water from the sand grid system and carry it away. After a winter deluge, the drainage system pulls the extra water out of the soil and helps the course dry faster.

To handle surface and subsurface water, Gump has installed long curtain drains in low-lying fairways. These drains reach five feet below the surface to intercept the ground water that runs off the hillsides and otherwise would surface on the fairways.

Keeping turf fit

The alternating dry summers and rainy winters stress turf grasses and superintendents who are trying to keep a course open 365 days a year, including Christmas. To keep the greens in top performance, Gump says they've changed their philosophy of fertilizing. Instead of spraying all soluble fertilizer, they now incorporate fertilizer with more of an organic



Overlooking the undulating first hole, Monterey Bay can be seen in the background.

base with a diminished soluble spray schedule. Once a month the crew applies Nature Safe, an organic fertilizer with 1/2 lb of N per 1,000 sq. ft., supplementing with light applications of Griggs Brothers soluble spray-on fertilizer.

Since the greens are basically 100 percent annual blue grass, which is susceptible to fungus problems, Gump applies preventive broad-spectrum fungicides throughout the summer for summer patch and other diseases, rotating Heritage, Banner Maxx and Rubigan, with applications every 30 days. He also treats the turf with two applications of Scotts FF2 during the winter to prevent pink snow mold.

Return of the native

The past five years have seen another change in philosophy of managing this course in regards to plantings on hillsides and landscape borders. Taking a cue from California landscape designers and environmentalists, Gump and course landscape manager Francine Moody have replaced high maintenance annuals with California native plants in borders, on slopes and around creek beds.

"Annuals are high maintenance, expensive and water-loving," says Moody. "We plant more perennials and evergreens and find we actually have more diversity which lasts year round." When choosing plants, Moody pays attention to plants that would be good for wildlife, something that would produce shelter, nectar or berries.

If treated right the first two years (for example,



not giving them too much water) the plants establish themselves very well, says Moody. As she plants a perennial plant like coffee berry, manzanita or ceanothus, she inserts a fertilizer tab in the ground beside the plant to help get it started in its new home. Care after that consists of fertilizing once or twice a year. Native plants are drought tolerant, and require less watering.

On hillsides which have erosion prob-

lems, Moody has been replacing introduced species with ornamental grasses and evergreens. "We try to get away from one solid ground cover," says Moody. "When everything is rooted at the same depth like ice plant, it gets wet in hard rains and pulls and caves- in the slope."

People are a plus

Moody shares a long employment history (over 20 years) at the course with

The bunkered green for the acclaimed 16th hole, which cannot be seen from the tee, was considered by designer Alister MacKenzie to be one of his favorite holes

many other employees. The golf course employs 18 people, with over a third of them working there longer than Superintendent Gump, who joined the course in 1981. Both the mechanic, Ramone Artegea, and Gump's assistant, Juan Artegea, have been at the course for 27 years. "There's a lot of benefits working with a great crew that has a good working background knowledge of the golf course," says Gump. Since the course is open all year, he lays off only one or two people when play slows a bit in the winter season. The course is open to the public 90% of the time and is owned by a corporation made up of 377 stockholders. □

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MacKenzie, a remarkable 'doctor'

Dr. Alister MacKenzie was born in 1870 in Yorkshire, England, and died in 1934 in Santa Cruz, Calif., not far from Pasatiempo Golf Course, one of the last courses he designed. Measured by any standard, he was a remarkable man. MacKenzie studied chemistry, medicine and natural science at Cambridge University and built a promising medical career in England but abandoned it in 1918 to design golf courses. This he did with great success all over the world. Among his greatest achievements are Cypress Point, Royal Melbourne and, of course, Augusta National. His "13 general principles of architecture" are still used by top golf course architects.