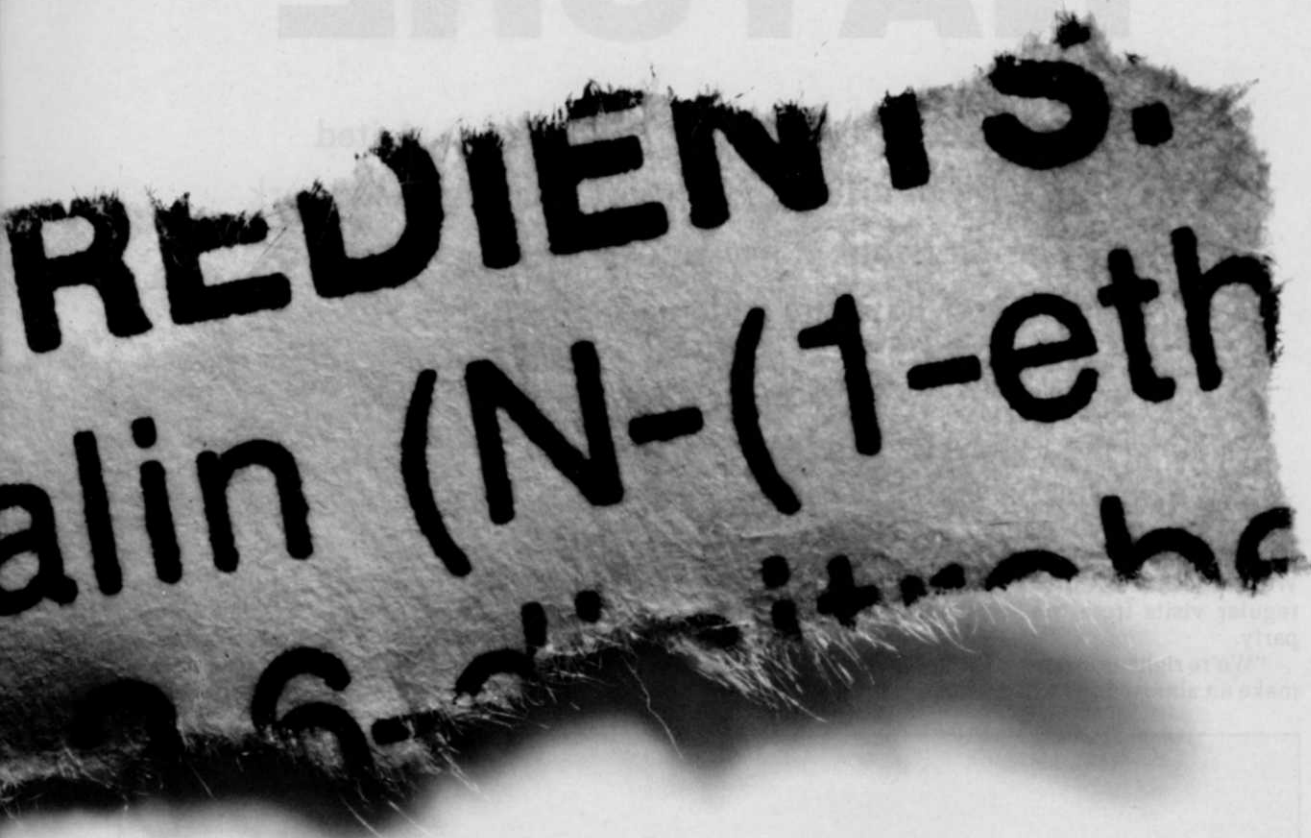


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IN TOUCH WITH NATURE

Blacklick Woods Metro Golf Course is visited regularly by wildlife from the surrounding metropark. The superintendent, however, would be a little happier without the added animal traffic.

by Jeff Sobul, assistant editor

Kerry Ortmeyer could probably use some help from the late Marlin Perkins of TV's "Wild Kingdom." His course, 36-hole Blacklick Woods Metro Golf Course near Columbus, Ohio, gets regular visits from the local wildlife. But it's no party.

"We're right next door to the park," he notes. Deer make an almost daily trek across the course. "What-

ever gets in their way, they just go right across it."

By land...

A number of holes get deer tracks on the greens and in the sand traps. (Ortmeyer speculates that the deer like the way the sand feels on their hoofs.) He says that if the deer walk across the course the damage is usually minimal. But if they run, and the course



Despite an ongoing program to plant trees over the past 10 to 15 years, Blacklick Woods Golf Course remains relatively wide open, to the delight of most weekend golfers.

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happens to be a bit moist, then there are problems with tracks. The deer also ate a wildflower area he was attempting to establish, as well as some other flower beds.

Ortmeyer says, however, that deer problems are not that serious, merely annoying. Besides, he adds, "we're not allowed to do anything because all park lands are open to wildlife. The course is part of the park. The deer have more right to be there than we do."

Wildlife problems don't stop there. "We are vastly overpopulated with racoons and skunks," Ortmeyer says. When grubs invade the fairways, immediate roughs and green banks in September and October, skunks and racoons follow shortly thereafter, tearing up the ground in search of the tasty little morsels.

Part of the problem, Ortmeyer notes, is that the park is "landlocked," surrounded on all four sides by either interstate highways or housing developments. "(The animals) don't have anywhere else to go," he says. "They've literally torn up whole areas looking for grubs."

Ortmeyer estimates that he and his crew spend three to six hours per day repairing damage done by the little furballs. Sometimes it involves removing and reseeding the damaged area, other times it only involves rolling a piece of sod displaced by a racoon back in place.

This year and last year the problems have been mostly with masked chafer grubs. However, seven or eight years ago, the city of Reynoldsberg, the closest town to the park, suffered a Japanese beetle invasion. These were taken out just in time for the masked chafers to arrive. "If it's not one thing, it's another," Ortmeyer laments.

The grubs like to take up residence on green banks shielded from the wind. "We get mostly west winds so grubs infest the east-facing green banks where they have shelter from the wind," Ortmeyer says. "When the winds are from the east, the grubs are on the west side."

For four years he had been using Oftanol to control the grubs, with some success. Now, however, the Oftanol seems to no longer be effective. Therefore, Ortmeyer has switched to using Sevin and Mocap.

The insecticides got an early test this year. In the spring, grubs started surfacing on the fairway near the creek on the par five 4th hole, and the 'coons and skunks started feasting. Ortmeyer came in with an application of Sevin and Mocap, watered them in well and effectively got rid of the grubs.

...and by air

Geese also cause problems at Blacklick Woods, as they seem to do at many courses. Ortmeyer says they overwinter near the course and in spring they congregate on course ponds.

They eat turf on greens and fairways and then leave their deposits on the same. Luckily (for the golfers), there are only a few ponds on the course so the problem is not a major one. It did become enough of an inconvenience to get the Ohio Department of Natural Resources out to trap and transplant a number of the foul fowl. "We've had a few others come in," notes Ortmeyer, "but they don't seem to be hanging around."

The geese are probably fortunate they aren't

hanging around. The two courses, one championship length and one executive length, handle about 75,000 rounds each year, about 60 percent on the championship course. That's a lot of errant golf balls for the geese to dodge.

Year-round job

The course is open year-round so those rounds are spaced out somewhat over the course of an entire year. Ortmeyer stresses that being open year-round does not put any added pressure on him or the course. "The weather is what puts pressure on me.

"If we're going to have problems, we don't let it get out of hand," he says. "If our tees and greens aren't playable, we won't open."

Ortmeyer terms this past winter as extraordinary. "There was much play during the winter," but, he adds, "we weren't open more than 45 days over a three-month period (December-February)."

"We open when conditions are suitable," adds course general manager Joe Hoover. "We'll close the course even in the summer. It's a day-to-day decision."

Working in traffic

Maintaining a high level of playability around all those golfers is a difficult task for Ortmeyer's six full-time staffers and six or seven additional summer help.

Because of the traffic, Ortmeyer notes, "we can't do everything we want. We have to get in and get out fast." To conserve time and keep disruption of play to a minimum, the staff works on only one nine-hole section at a time. Aerifying and top-dressing are done on a limited basis at best, but he says they have "plenty of chemicals

doing a good job."

His biggest cultural problem has been anthracnose on *Poa annua* in poa/bluegrass fairways. A fungicide program has kept that in control. The greens are bentgrass. "We don't have the irrigation or budget to maintain bent fairways," he notes. "but our budget is enough so that we don't have to cut corners either."

The course is funded by Franklin County though it is actually a sub-division of the state. A board of directors is appointed by a state probate judge to run the course. The course submits its own budget to the county and, according to Ortmeyer, has had sufficient funding in each of the 19 years he has been superintendent.

Keeping in shape

One of the most successful methods the course has had for keeping costs down has been to hire a staff mechanic. "We do a pretty good job of maintaining our old equipment," he says proudly. That equipment includes 20-year-old tractors and a 15-year-old Cushman Truckster.

"Any 18-hole facility should have a mechanic who understands the equipment," he advises. "A mechanic can pay for himself by keeping a machine running."

And with some careful driving, none of those machines will hit any deer, flatten any skunks, run through any goose. . . .

LM

The grubs like to take up residence on green banks shielded from the wind.

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VOL. CXXXVI

The Daily Sun

GREENSBORO, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1987

NEW INSECTICIDE STOPS GRUBS IN 3 DAYS!

**"Lawn care experts
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by THOMAS BAGOT

Recent label approval by the Environmental Protection Agency marks the introduction of the ultimate product for grub control in home lawns.

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When your customers call you with a grub problem, they want results fast. And that's what they get with Triumph. And, because Triumph is restricted to lawn care applicators, your customers can only get it from you.

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BUILDING THE LINKS AT SPANISH BAY

An all fine fescue course is a bold stroke at Pebble Beach. Yet The Links at Spanish Bay is giving it a shot.



Despite the drought tolerance of fine fescue, Spanish Bay is irrigated. The system is checked by assistant superintendent Carl Rygg.

Imagine for a moment that you're about to tee off at a links-type course in Scotland. You toss a blade of fescue grass in the air to test the wind; you're exhilarated by the coastal view, the wind-swept dunes with bunkers formed over the years by sheep seeking shelter from the elements. You remember the history of those who have passed this way before. You tug at your tam, take a practice swing and address the ball...

The bunkers, dunes and absence of trees on the course are similar, and fine fescues covering the course from tee to green are the same. But you're playing The Links at Spanish Bay, Pebble Beach, Calif. What nature needed years to develop in Scotland was very intentionally integrated into this 6,870-yard, par-72 course along the 17 Mile Drive.

The design team of Robert Trent Jones Jr., Tom Watson and Frank D. "Sandy" Tatum transformed the 195 acres into a world-class course with large dunes, rolling fairways clipped short from tee to green, a continuous concrete cartpath, state-of-the-art amenities and equipment. A superb blending of the old and new.

Superintendent Mike Phillips started with the Pebble Beach Co. in 1978. He has been superintendent at Spyglass Hill and Pebble Beach Golf Links where he supervised preparations for the 1982 U.S. Open. After coming to Spanish Bay, Phillips was responsible for supervision and construction of The Links, and now, its overall maintenance. Assistant Carl Rygg had 14 years experience at the Steamboat Springs course in Colorado. Rygg helps supervise the staff of 28.

Plans and permits

Greenscape Ltd. built the course, but years of planning and permits preceded the first scoop. The Links at Spanish Bay falls into the authority of the California Coastal Commission. With committee meetings, review boards and public hearings behind, the Coastal Commission approved the plans and granted a permit for the construction of a golf course on July

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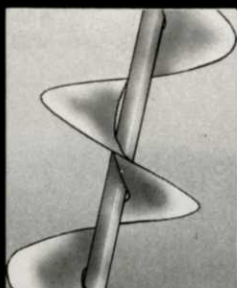
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The Links at Spanish Bay has 95 acres of fine fescue. It's the only fine-fescue course in the United States.

11, 1985.

This permit was contingent on the reconstruction of 100 acres of silicon sand dunes that had been mined from the 1930s through 1973. All that was left was coastal bedrock, so a conveyor belt system was implemented to transport sand two miles from Sand City. In May, 1986 the conveyor belt began hauling the 530,000 cubic yards of sand required to construct and contour the dunes...some up to 24 feet high.

As part of the land reclamation agreement in the Monterey County Land Use Plan, Pebble Beach Co. is replanting the dunes with native plant species and enhancing two wetland areas. Ryegrass and native plants were hydroseeded onto the dunes in June 1986. The ryegrass is to stabilize the sand until the native plant seedlings could establish.

Some of the flowering plants included in the seeding program are California beach poppies, pink sand verbena, lizard tail and yellow bush lupine. The dunes themselves are planted in dune sedge, a gray-green low growing plant that becomes a buffer between the native plants and the maintained areas of the course. Dune sedge covers the gallery areas. Ice plant, used for dune stabilization at one time, is not native to the area, so the spreading vegetation must be removed by hand...a painfully slow and labor-demanding process.

'Fine' turf

The Links at Spanish Bay is the first all

fine fescue golf course in the United States; 95 acres are seeded with the fine-leaved cool-season grass.

"Fine fescues are commonly found in fairways and tees as part of a mixture," explains Phillips, "but mowing them at $\frac{5}{32}$ of an inch for daily play is an innovative concept. The more the course matures, the more impressed we are."

The course was said to be outstanding for its "soft" opening on Nov. 4, 1987.

The turf seeding, fertilization and maintenance recommendations were prescribed by Rich Hurley, Ph.D., of Lofts Seed.

The tee and fairway blend is $\frac{1}{3}$

Jamestown, $\frac{1}{3}$ Barthala and $\frac{1}{3}$ Koket; all chewings type fescue. Tees and fairways were seeded at a rate of 250 lbs./acre. This amount was felt to be adequate even though 300 lbs. was recommended. Roughs and steep grades were also seeded at 250 lbs./acre with a blend of 40 percent Reliant hard fescue, 30 percent Ensylda creeping red fescue and 30 percent fairway/tee blend.

The greens were all seeded with a 50/50 mix of Jamestown chewings fescue and Exeter colonial bentgrass. This is actually 20 percent fine fescue and 80 percent bent by weight. The base for the greens is a 14 inch sand/peat cap with 10 percent peat. Of the 90 percent sand, 90 percent of that is in the medium grade range.

Fertilizer applied at the first seeding was 16-16-16 with one lb. N/1000 sq.ft. Establishment rates for the first 14 months was 21-7-4 after eight weeks, with four lbs. N/1000 sq.ft. "Fertilization rate now that the course has matured is determined by soil testing," Phillips says. "We then order our fertilizer with minor nutrients mixed according to the resulting analysis."

Tees and fairways are mowed at $\frac{1}{2}$ inch with triplex mowers with catchers. Greens are hand mowed at $\frac{5}{32}$ inch. In addition to golf, the 24,000-sq.ft. clubhouse will accommodate a pro shop, locker rooms, starter area, retail shops, health club and 50-patron restaurant/bar. Across from the clubhouse are eight outdoor tennis courts with pro shop and lockers.

As with the other Pebble Beach Company courses, The Links at Spanish Bay will be open to the public. Carts are required and winds with gusts to could be a factor, but playing this unique course will offer its own rewards. **LM**



A crew member rakes one of Spanish Bay's large sand traps.