

USGA COURSE CONSULTING SERVICE

Site Visit Report

Herons Glen Golf and Country Club
North Fort Myers

Visit Date: January 20, 2025

Present:

Tim Kortanek, Director of Golf and Grounds
Matthew Bourne, Golf Course Superintendent
Bruce Johnson, Green Committee Chair
Bruce Harris, Head Golf Professional
Chris Neff, USGA Green Section Agronomist

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USGA GreenSection

Executive Summary

It was my pleasure to visit Herons Glen Golf and Country Club to conduct a Course Consulting Service (CCS) visit on behalf of the USGA. This was my first time seeing the course, and I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the facility with Tim Kortanek, along with other key management and green committee members.

The course underwent a significant renovation in 2021, with a primary focus on restoring the size of the putting greens, installing new infrastructure, and regrassing the course with 'Bimini' bermudagrass. Overall, the course was in outstanding condition, especially considering the demands of a busy winter golfing season. Notably, Herons Glen hosts an impressive 55,000 rounds of golf annually, making its exceptional upkeep even more impressive.

Given the challenges that the West Coast of Florida has faced over the past year, it was remarkable to see the course in such pristine condition. This is a testament to Tim and his team's dedication to maintaining the highest standards for both the members and guests.

Additionally, I was particularly impressed by the attention to detail throughout the course. Every area, including the landscape beds, was meticulously maintained, enhancing the course's overall aesthetic appeal. This level of care and professionalism is evident not only in daily maintenance but also in course setup and ongoing management practices.

During my visit, a variety of topics were discussed, and numerous questions were addressed. However, the focus of the visit was on the overall course conditions, areas for improvement, and several operational adjustments aimed at enhancing efficiency and success. The report will cover the following items:

- **Putting Greens.** During our recent visit, the putting greens were in excellent condition, a testament to the meticulous care they receive. The greens exhibited great density and provided an outstanding playing surface on the day of my visit. I reviewed the fertility program that Tim and his team have developed, which is both well-structured and practical. This program ensures steady, controlled growth while prioritizing the reduction of thatch and organic matter—both essential for the long-term sustainability of the ultradwarf bermudagrass.

  Tim's commitment to enhancing surface management, particularly during the demanding summer months, highlights his team's dedication to maintaining high putting green standards and delivering an exceptional golfing experience at Herons Glen. However, executing these cultural practices is challenging given the high volume of golf rounds played annually. We had an in-depth discussion about the potential impact of adjusting tee time scheduling during the summer months and how such changes could benefit both the maintenance team and overall turfgrass conditions.

- **Optimizing Golf Rounds and Course Maintenance.** Herons Glen is a heavily utilized golf course, hosting an impressive 55,000 rounds annually. Given this high volume of play, it is commendable that the course remains in such excellent condition. Tim's implementation of traffic management strategies, combined with well-planned cultural and agronomic programs, has been instrumental in maintaining high-quality playing surfaces year-round.

  However, during the summer months, the double-tee scheduling—where tee times are set on both the first and tenth holes—creates significant challenges for the maintenance team. The

primary issue arises when these groups cross over, leaving no open gaps for Tim and his team to carry out essential cultural practices, such as verticutting, topdressing, or venting. Without adjustments to the schedule, these critical maintenance activities become increasingly difficult to complete.

A practical solution would be to implement a single-tee start in the mornings, eliminating the crossover issue and allowing for uninterrupted maintenance work. This adjustment would provide Tim's team with the necessary time to execute their programs efficiently while ensuring the course remains in top condition. Importantly, this change would not negatively impact the total number of rounds played throughout the year but would significantly enhance the ability to maintain optimal course conditions.

- **'Bimini' Bermudagrass.** The decision to use 'Bimini' bermudagrass on all playing areas—except the putting greens—during the 2021 golf course renovation has proven to be an excellent one. As I toured the course, I was pleased to see consistently healthy fairways, rough, and tees. The striking color, density, and playability of this newer bermudagrass variety provide Florida golf courses with a level of quality and maintenance efficiency that was previously unattainable.

  Tim and his team have established a strong agronomic program to ensure the course remains in top condition, even with the high volume of play and the challenging growing conditions in the Fort Myers area. We had an in-depth discussion about future initiatives, including enhanced cultural practices and refined pre-emergent herbicide programs, to support the continued health and maturity of the turf while maintaining excellent playability.

- **Detail and Presentation:** The art of "detail and presentation" on a golf course, orchestrated by the superintendent and their team, is often overlooked during my CCS visits. This aspect begins with clear expectations set by the club or superintendent, which are then translated into action through effective training and communication with the staff. Tim and his team have mastered this art to perfection. I applaud Tim for his exemplary leadership in upholding such high standards and for recognizing the significance of this aspect to the overall experience at Herons Glen.

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Putting Greens

Observations

1. **The plant health on the 'TifEagle' was excellent during my visit. The surface exhibited great density and met playability expectations.**
   - This is a testament to present cultural practices.
   - The canopy was uniform, and there were no signs of disease.
   - A few putting greens have sustained damage due to high nematode counts in site specific areas.
   - Areas are small and don't affect the playability of the putting greens.



Winter cultural practices with required venting with needle-tine aeration to keep the putting greens healthy.

2. **The soil profiles examined had two inches of organic matter accumulated on top of the original construction greens mix.**
   - This accumulation is typical in the age of the putting greens, and present cultural practices keep the organic matter as diluted as possible.



No. 1 putting green soil profile exhibiting a good mixture of sand and organic matter in the top two inches of the rootzone.



No. 11 putting green soil profile exhibiting a good sand to organic matter ratio in the top two inches of the rootzone.

3. **During our tour, we examined root samples. Most of the roots extended two to three inches, which is reasonable for ultradwarf bermudagrass greens during the winter season.**



Roots examined on No. 1 putting green.



Roots examined on No. 11 putting green.

4. **The staff is doing a good job edging the perimeters of the putting greens to minimize the encroachment of the 'Bimini' bermudagrass.**
5. **We discussed the present Earthworks fertility program on the putting greens at Herons Glen.**
    - The program is very sound and has been successful at many clubs in my travels in the Southeast.

Recommendations

1. **Perform an organic matter test on a few greens to determine the organic matter concentration in the top rootzone. This will help select the cultural practice program to keep the greens in great shape year-round. I will assist with this test and will help guide any changes in the cultural practice program.**
2. **I recommend adding one deep-tine aerification to the annual cultural practice plan.**
    - Deep-tine aerification machines can reach 8 to 10 inches deep within the soil profile.
    - This will improve infiltration, gas exchange, and rooting on greens in this stage of life.
    - Deep-Tine Aeration (usga.org)
3. **During aeration activities, apply Earthworks™ Myco-Replenish 3-3-3 with Mycorrhizae (EarthWorks) on the putting greens and incorporate the material into the holes from the core aeration.**
4. **Add the new fungicide technology called TYMIRIUM® into the putting green spray program.**
    - Bermudagrass Forum Highlights Nematode Control Strategies and More
    - Syngenta Professional Solutions announces two new active ingredients: PLINAZOLIN technology and TYMIRIUM technology | GreenCast | Syngenta
5. **Continue evaluating the encroachment of 'Bimini' grass into the 'TifEagle' putting greens and explore future options, such as removing turf along the perimeter, to maintain the original size of the greens.**

Optimizing Golf Rounds and Course Maintenance

Recommendations

1. **During the summer months, I recommend eliminating 1 and 10 tee starts in the morning timeframe to assist the golf course maintenance staff in completing vital daily operations and cultural practices. With increased mowing frequency and the need for more staff to handle additional tasks, uninterrupted access to the course will improve efficiency and course conditions.**
    - Starting tee times sequentially from the 1st tee rather than using both the 1st and 10th tees allows the golf course maintenance staff to work more efficiently. It provides uninterrupted access ahead of play in the early morning, enabling them to complete tasks like mowing, bunker raking, and irrigation checks without interference from golfers. This not only improves

course conditions but also enhances safety and workflow, ensuring the team can maintain high-quality playing surfaces without constant stops and workarounds.

- Starting tee times solely from the 1st tee provides the maintenance staff with uninterrupted access ahead of the first golfers, allowing them to complete essential practices like topdressing, verticutting, and venting the greens. These tasks are vital for maintaining smooth, healthy putting surfaces but require time and minimal disruption to be most effective. A crossover tee start later in the morning can lead to delays, as golfers may encounter maintenance equipment and staff on multiple holes. Frequent stoppages also reduce crew efficiency and prolong necessary work. By minimizing interruptions, maintenance teams can complete tasks properly, ensuring optimal green conditions without negatively impacting the golfer experience.
- Improving Pace of Play and the Golfer Experience

Bimini Bermudagrass

Observations

1. **The 'Bimini' tees, fairways, and rough were among the best-conditioned surfaces I've seen during my frequent CCS visits in Florida.**
2. **I was impressed with the Civatas® program implemented by the maintenance team to promote the health of the 'Bimini' bermudagrass.**



Winter conditions on the 'Bimini' bermudagrass tees were observed to be excellent.



Perfect fairway conditions meeting aesthetic and playability expectations.

Recommendations

1. **Maintain Current Fertility and PGR Programs.**
   - I recommend continuing with the current fertility and plant growth regulator (PGR) programs used on the fairways at Herons Glen.
   - Only addition to the program would be to add a Earthworks product into the fertilizer program. Add either the 8-2-2 Replenish 8-2-2 Fairway Program:EarthWorks or BIO Royale from Vereen's Fertilizer that has the combination of Earthworks and Turf Royale from Yara.
2. **Enhance Cultural Practices.**
   - If possible, increase the frequency of cultural practices such as aeration, verticutting, topdressing, and grooming to effectively reduce thatch and organic matter buildup.
   - The upcoming acquisition of the Toro® 1298 aerifier will significantly support this initiative.
   - Use the deepest tine setting on the machine that avoids turf damage caused by heaving.
   - Course Care: Thatch Control Key To Firm, Resilient Fairways (usga.org)

Detail and Presentation

Observations

1. **Heron Glen impressed me with its meticulous attention to detail and exceptional course presentation during our tour.**
2. **I was pleased to see the recent concrete project that added necessary curbing to various areas of the golf course, enhancing both functionality and aesthetic detail on the property.**



Example of new curbing that has been completed throughout the golf course.

Summary

This concludes the summary of the major topics discussed during our visit and tour of Herons Glen. I appreciate the opportunity to conduct a CCS visit representing the USGA Green Section. Some of these items can be discussed further in person or on the phone at your convenience. I look forward to continuing our relationship and being part of the success of the golf course. If you have any questions regarding this report, please get in touch with me.

Respectfully submitted,



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USGA Green Section

Distribution:

Tim Kortanek, Director of Golf and Grounds

USGA Green Section

Turfgrass and Environmental Research

The USGA Green Section appreciates your support of the Course Consulting Service. First started in 1953, the Course Consulting Service provides unbiased assessments of golf facilities to optimize resources and reduce the consumption of critical resources. The proceeds from the Course Consulting Service directly support the USGA's annual $2 million investment in turfgrass and environmental research, which provides an estimated $2 billion annual benefit to the U.S. golf industry. Follow the QR Code for more information.

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Green Section Record

The USGA Green Section Record, is a free digital magazine offering the latest information on turfgrass management, environmental sustainability, innovation in golf course maintenance, and turfgrass research. If you would like to stay updated on regional topics, best management practices, and industry trends, please subscribe for free to The Record.

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