

The Grounds Crew

Faint lines that show the location of subsurface irrigation on the greens at Oakmont Country Club during the U.S. Open did not alter putting conditions for runner-up Tiger Woods (below) or the rest of the field.



LINES OF DEFENSE

Other than Phil Mickelson's ranting early in the week, there was nary a negative word about conditions of Oakmont Country Club during last month's U.S. Open. Superintendent John Zimmers and his crew had the place in tip-top shape. Still, one couldn't help but wonder about those lines visible on some of the putting surfaces.

The lines were telltale signs of subsurface drainage installed in stages in 2002 and 2005 that have helped save the club's original 1903 pushup greens. When Zimmers arrived at Oakmont in 1999, greens drained at a rate of one-quarter inch per hour, which is problematic at a club where members expect and demand U.S. Open-like conditions all the time. Five years ago, Zimmers called upon XGD Systems of Stuart, Fla., to install its subsurface system on Nos. 6 and 8, then the worst-performing greens on the course, Zimmers told *The Crew*.

"They turned out to be our two best greens," Zimmers said. He showed the results – greens that now drain at 6 inches per hour – to his membership. They were awed by the difference. Eventually, Zimmers was able to sell the idea, and by spring 2005 a total of eight greens had been outfitted with the XGD system. The rest of the course was completed that fall.

The lines were spaced every 6 feet, and the only reminders of their presence today are an absence of water after it rains and those lines that occasionally become visible when that infamous Oakmont *Poa* becomes stressed – which has a tendency to happen during the U.S. Open. But even when the lines appear, they have no effect on putting conditions, Zimmers said.

"I'll take that any day as long as the greens are performing," Zimmers said. "Our membership here embraces firm, fast conditions. I think this is one of the best things they've ever done."

Zimmers admitted he was nervous about allowing someone to gouge holes into Oakmont's historic greens.

"Initially (the members) thought, 'Are you crazy?'" he said. "It was frightening to run trenches through the greens."

His fears were allayed when he saw the care exhibited by XGD workers, who can complete work on a 6,000-square-foot green in about three days.

"All their work is done by hand," Zimmers said. "When they're finished, you can cut a cup and play golf. It's amazing."

"This is the solution for courses that have old pushup greens that don't drain well."

Ginn 'er done

Bobby Ginn should just consider starting his own tour, because that's about the only thing the real estate mogul has yet to get his hands – and name – on.

Ginn's sports division, which operates two LPGA tournaments and a Champions Tour stop, is further expanding its portfolio by bailing out the PGA Tour and taking over the next-to-last date on the fall schedule. It's the spot previously reserved for the doomed Fresno, Calif., event originally known as the Running Horse Championship.

The Crew has learned the inaugural Ginn Classic at Tesoro will be played Oct. 25-28 at Ginn's Tesoro Club in Port St. Lucie, Fla. The tournament will have a \$4.5 million purse and will be rotated to other Ginn-owned properties possibly as soon as next year.

Here's another dogged reminder

OK, this really is the last chance to submit nominations for the 2008 Superintendent's Best Friend Calendar.

The calendar will include pinups of 13 lucky winners as chosen by the editorial and production folks at TurfNet, the Magazine.

This little tiger pictured at right is T.J., a 2-year-old chihuahua that belongs to Camden (S.C.) Country Club equipment technician Don Sills. When he's not keeping Sills company in the shop or hanging with the crew T.J. likes roaming the course in search of squirrels, rabbits and deer, proving that good things do come in small packages.

To nominate your dog – or anyone else's for that matter – please send slides, prints or CDs of digital images to Production

"Quoteworthy"

"I think we are the best teaching institution in the world in turfgrass."

– Penn State University professor
Alfred Turgeon, Ph.D.

Department, Turnstile Publishing Co., 1500 Park Center Drive, Orlando, FL 32835. Or, e-mail digital images (high-resolution only please) to ads@golfweek.com.

All submissions must include the dog's name, age and breed; photographer's name and phone number; owners name, title and phone number; and the name and location

where the dog and owner work.

Get your dog's photo in by the Aug. 1 deadline, and TurfNet will personalize a mug with the photo you submitted.

If you still have questions about how this works, please call Kevin Waters at 407-563-7026 for more information.

