

1st YEAR AS A GREENS SUPERINTENDENT!

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After spending 14 years at Southwood Golf and Country Club, I found myself with a new job on March 23. I had just been hired as the golf course superintendent at Hecla Island.

While talking with my golf chairman I was informed that I would start my new job on April 16, 1990. I was also told that I was to receive a one year contract, plus a mobile home trailer for living accommodations on Hecla Island.

On April 15, 1990 with the help of my girlfriend and a good friend, we packed up my truck, and my girlfriends car to make the 2 hour trip north of Winnipeg on highway 8. After arriving to my trailer we all unloaded both vehicles, sat around, had some dinner and a few drinks to calm the nerves for what was about to come. After having an emotional goodbye with my girlfriend, I came back into the trailer sat around and wondered what I had got myself into, sitting in a trailer alone, no phone, not knowing a single person on the island (don't even know if there was anyone else on the island), for the first time after I had taken the job I felt alone, sick to my stomach, and yes, "SCARED!"

On my first day of work on Monday I met my mechanic who had been at work since March 5. After a coffee and talking to one another my mechanic informed me that the golf course usually opens on the last weekend in April, by visually looking around I noticed that there was a lot of work to do before opening... eg. Painting of tee markers, benches, ball washers, bunker rakes and other spring clean up jobs. To get the ball rolling I hired on 4 men to start the following Monday.

"EMPLOYEES"

Each and every one of the golf course employees (12 in all), all belong to the MGEA Government Employees Union. After spending 14 years in a non union environment, I was a little sceptical on how a union works, and generally how I would deal with it throughout the year.

The union wage scale depends upon what kind of job classification one is in, how many years one had been a government employee or "Seniority".

The wage scale for my men went as follows!

MECHANIC -\$12.38 per hour, job description, self evident

OPERATOR -\$11.25 per hour, job description, mowing greens, tees, aprons, banks of greens, and fairways, front end loader, backhoe.

LABOURERS -\$10.24 - \$10.95 per hour, a first year employee on the golf course starts out at \$10.24 per hour, after working "1008" labourer hours at \$10.24, one is given a raise to \$10.56 per hour, after another 1008 hours, another raise is given to \$10.95 per hour, one who is at \$10.95 per hour stays at this wage until an operator job comes open, or the union signs a new contract with the Manitoba Government. Job description of a labourer is changing holes and tee markers, weed eating, pushing a lawn mower, rough cutting, raking sand traps, and garbage pick up.

All of my employees except one had to drive to work each day, some had to drive anywhere from 30 to 45 miles each way to work everyday!

All in all I had a good group of employees working for me, making it a good working environment for both parties.

OPENING DAY!

Planning on opening on the last weekend in April we on Hecla Island received two inches of snow on Friday. On Wednesday May 2, spending much of the day going around and checking all the greens and fairways and tees. I decided to open the following day because after walking on the greens to see if water would squeeze out under my feet and changing all the holes to see if the frost was below the cup setting, the pro and myself opened the course at 10:00 a.m, on Thursday May 3, 1990.

GREENS

The greens at Hecla are quite large, averaging 8,000 square feet with the biggest being no. 18 at 10,000 sq. feet.

After removing the mats and snowfences around the greens a general inspection was made to determine whether any winter kill from ice damage or snow mold took place. I came to the conclusion that a little or no snow mold was evident, but greens 3, 4, 9, upper 12, 13 and 14 were hit with ice damage, 12 13, and 4 being the worst.

With having a fairly wet spring the greens were given an application of Scotts Broad Spectrum at normal rate to prevent any snow mold from starting.

We then took on the task of sodding the ice damaged greens, within a month all the sodding was completed, after we had aerated, top dressed and fertilized the sodded patches had knitted in just fine and had developed a good root system.

The greens are mowed everyday during the 4 month growing season, mid May to mid September at a height of 3/16", and 1/4" during the early spring and fall.

Fertilization of the greens takes place on an average of every 15-20 days, I use a fairly high nitrogen with a reasonable high potash to maintain a good color and growing plant with the nitrogen, and an erect healthy plant with the potash, since Hecla is a public golf course with a lot of traffic during the summer months (last year 30,000 rounds from May 3 to Oct 15).

With using a high nitrogen fertilizer I found that my greens were lush but also very thick. So about every week or two we started verticutting to thin the turf out to allow water, and air to penetrate into the soil, which also provided us with a quicker putting surface.

Greens were watered 3 to 4 times per week at 20 to 25 minutes each time. Brown patch and dollar spot are not much of a concern on Hecla's greens, at around 6:30 - 7:00 p.m. the wind usually picks up off Lake Winnipeg and its just like a big air conditioner was turned on.

All the greens by the lake, 4 upper and lower 12's, 11, 13 and 14 during the summer months usually have a lot of dew on them in the morning. Being concerned of dollar spot I instructed the greens cutters to cut these greens first thing in the morning.

Greensmowers at Hecla are checked daily for sharpness, and backlapped twice a week usually Tuesday and Friday.

The last things we did to the greens before winter comes, is an application of fungicide, being a calo-clor fan and not being able to use it this year or any other year in the future, I decided to use quintozene 75W. I put down two applications at 6 oz. per 1,000 the first week in October and 8 oz. per 1,000 the middle of October. I also used Scott's FFII at the recommended rate 3 days after the last fungicide spraying took place.

Greens by the lake, 11, both 12's, 13, 14 and 4 were all top dressed, evergreen 1 piece mats and bush were also used on these greens to help greens from the desicating winds that come off the lake during the winter months.

On the 3rd green we also put topdressing down for in the spring since the green is facing the south east and every little sunlight hits it, I was hoping the 70-20-10 mix would attract some heat in the spring time.

TEES

Tees being the second most important part of any golf course, are aerated, plugs dragged back into the holes and fertilized in the spring time. When seeding is needed a mixture of 80% Kentucky Blue Grass and 20% Creeping Red Fescue is used with a 50 sand and 50 soil mix. The same seed mix was used in construction of the golf course back in 1974 with information that I came across in the files here at the golf course.

Watering is done 3 times a week by quick coupler sprinklers, usually the same time the greens are done. Tees at Hecla are cut at 9/16" 2 to 3 times per week depending upon the growing season.

For winter preparation of the tees at Hecla, nothing is done as far as fungicide is concerned, since some of the tees are a lot bigger in size than the greens are. We applied an Esso starter fertilizer 10-30-10 in late October to enhance an early spring green up when the snow is gone.

FAIRWAYS

Since the fairways are a much larger area to take care of, the maintenance of them at Hecla is a much simpler procedure. The fairways are cut at 1" all year long with a seven gang Parkmaster tractor. Constant cutting is done throughout the year usually 2 to 3 times per week, cutting usually the same direction everytime. We tried to cross cut once every two weeks to help stand the grass up and to stagger tracks somewhat for compaction on the fairways.

Before winter came all the fairways were aerated and fertilized with C-I-L 25-4-10 fairway fertilizer.

IRRIGATION

Watering of the tees and greens at Hecla were done by myself usually at night time or in the early morning if the winds were too strong the night before.

During the day the fairways and some of the rough are watered by 1 man. All fairways can have 1 inch of water put on them in a 3 1/2 day period on an 8 hour schedule. The pumping station at Hecla consists of 2-40 H.P. motors that draw 820 G.P.M.. I find that 10 hours of pumping per day during hot weather is sufficient. At 10 hours per day and 820 G.P.M. this means the course will receive about 492,000 gallons of water per day.

It's sure a great feeling that Hecla has Lake Winnipeg to draw water from, not like Niakwa, Windsor and St. Boniface Golf Courses in the city who draw from the Seine River which usually dries up every summer.

SAND TRAPS

Having 86 sand traps on the course I found that it was a good job for just one man to keep them groomed and weed free, edging is done once a year usually early summer with the help of 3 or 4 additional staff members. Having 12 staff members, and 3 of these doing the grounds at the hotel fulltime, I found it hard to keep up with the grass cutting and to have 3 or 4 men working on the sand traps till they were all completed. With having strong winds of the lake additional sand is added to the traps throughout the year usually 3/4 of a yard to 1 yard at a time.

SUPERINTENDENT, PRO, RELATIONSHIP

After 14 years at Southwood G.C. and the same pro being there all those years, I had nothing directly to do with him all those years. Being the superintendent at Hecla was my first experience with a pro. Jim Mayer the pro at Hecla and myself in my own estimation got along really well throughout the golf season. Although there were a couple of times during the season that I closed the course to power carts because of much water lying around, Jim never questioned me and understood the reason for me doing this.

While sitting down and writing this article for the newsletter, I still remember the many nights that Jim would come with me while I was watering tees and greens. He would also bring along his radio so we could listen to the Bomber or Jet games. As many years as I have been in the golf course business, I have never heard of any other pro doing what Jim did with the superintendent of the golf course.

Although there were many other experiences that went on during my first year as a superintendent, I believe this generally outlines my first year at Hecla which was quite an enjoyable experience.

At this time I would like to express my appreciation to the board of the G.C.S.A.M. who asked me to write this article for the newsletter. It is my feeling that it can only help make our association more informative and stronger if our own members can contribute to the newsletter.

GOOD LUCK TO ALL MEMBERS IN '91'.

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