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In Beautiful Palm Beach County
The 2014 Editor's Choice For
Florida's Best Golf Course
Trump International Golf Club

By Joe Stine, Editor Florida Golf Magazine

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Course owner, Donald J. Trump's most recent and costly decision to replace the Mini-Verde bermudagrass with TifEagle on all 18 tournament-ready greens of The Championship Course after only two years serves as a definitive case-in-point of Trump International's tireless striving for over-all perfection.

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economic necessity, and horticulture in turn is more than just a science. Even more than a labor of love, at Trump International caring for the golf course is an art-form.

The lucky members of Trump International Golf Club also enjoy reciprocity at over a dozen different Trump Golf Properties worldwide, including Mr. Trump's most recent Florida golf course acquisitions, Trump Doral Resort & Spa and Trump National Jupiter.

It's true that Florida is and always will be a great golf destination, and there is certainly no shortage of great golf courses here, nor great golf course architects. But, it is also equally true that there is no finer golf course to be found in the Sunshine State than "The Championship Course" at Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, nor is there one that exemplifies a purer golf experience.





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Designer of all 27 golf holes at TIGC, golf course architect Jim Fazio, is pictured here in front of the new Tifeagle green of the 219 yard par three 17th hole at Trump International Golf Club in beautiful West Palm Beach, Florida.

Trump International Golf Club Sets Standards High

“At Trump International, caring for the golf course is an art-form.”

In 2011 the 18 original putting greens of The Championship Course at Trump International Golf Club were rebuilt under the watchful eye of golf course architect, Jim Fazio using a then-new type of bermudagrass called Mini-Verde. Fazio explained, “As of 2011 TifEagle and Mini-Verde bermudagrass were both put in at Trump International for evaluation. After two full seasons with both grasses, we debated some inconsistencies in color that the superintendent, Andy Kjos (pronounced Chose) was noticing and Mr. Trump made the decision to re-grass all 18 greens of The Championship Course with TifEagle.”

In December 2013 when this editor first heard about the new TifEagle greens, Dr. Gary Wiren, Head of Instruction at Trump International was quoted as saying, “The Mini-Verde greens were amazingly true for being torn up back in June. Mr. Trump should be commended for making the difficult decision to re-grass them again.”

For the benefit of Florida Golf Magazine’s readers Mr. Trump explained in great detail exactly how the change took place, “The process we used to change the 18 greens of The Championship Course from Mini-Verde to TifEagle is called 'No-Till',” said Mr. Trump. “This means there was no aggressive tilling of the soil and the great part of this process is that the greens tend to be softer the first year than with a traditional greens rebuild. They’ll still be quite firm but not quite as hard as new greens usually are the first year after being rebuilt.”

“The no-till process,” said Trump, “also kept the Jim Fazio designed greens’ contours intact throughout the project.” Elaborating, Trump said, “We were able to use this no-till process because we did not have any soil, thatch or drainage issues since we had already replaced the top four inches of soil two years prior.”

Below: Trump and his superintendent, Andy Kjos



“It was very important that we killed all the existing Mini-Verde on the greens before re-grassing,” exclaimed Mr. Trump. “Ninety-nine percent control would not have been good enough. The key to successfully establish a new, pure stand of turfgrass on greens is minimizing pest pressure and competition from existing vegetation, weeds, nematodes, insects, and disease pathogens at the time of planting. We would pay dearly if bermudagrass control was not perfect before planting.”

“So, on May 14th my superintendent, Andy Kjos sprayed the greens with a combination of the herbicides Roundup and Fusilade. The Roundup / Fusilade combination outperforms either herbicide alone. He sprayed the greens with these herbicides three times over a one month

period to kill the Mini-Verde. He also sprayed fertilizer in between to get the grass to grow because it needs to grow in order to take up the herbicide that in turn kills it.”



June 2013 - Trump International Golf Club re-grassed all 18 tournament-ready greens of The Championship Course with new TifEagle bermudagrass. Though it looks like dirt, most of this brown material is actually the old dead Mini-Verde bermudagrass being verticut, cleaned up and removed only 1/8 inch at a time using a re-grassing process called “no-till”.

Continuing with his impromptu dissertation, Mr. Trump then said, “A month later when the grass was dead our guys aggressively verticut it and pulled out all the dead material and thatch that had built up since 2011.”

“Vertical mowing, or verticutting as it is called utilizes a special type of mower with vertically rotating blades that cut into the turf surface to remove excess thatch or leaves, depending upon how deep the blades are set. Normally verticutting is a maintenance practice periodically performed to cut laterally growing stolons and rhizomes to help promote a more upright growth of the grass and smooth the grain. But in this case we used the verticutter for something entirely different,” said Trump, “and aggressively cut to depths ranging from 1/8 to 1/2 inch. We repeated this verticutting and clean-up process approximately twenty times on each green from numerous directions until we essentially removed all of the grass, but were careful to not disturb the dirt nor the contours of the greens.”



Photographed June 2013, the putting green at TIGC is seen here covered with a plastic tarp and being fumigated before being regrassed with TifEagle bermudagrass.

“Then, after our guys finally removed all the grass,” said Mr. Trump, “we then aerated the greens with a machine with 4 inch long hollow tines that removes the plugs leaving the ground looking like Swiss cheese covered with four inch deep holes that were $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter. Then after cleaning up and removing all the plugs left behind, we were ready to start the fumigation process.”

“So then our guys put plastic down over the green area and sealed the seams with glue and the edges with piles of dirt. Once they got the plastic tarp down and properly sealed, a licensed subcontractor came in and fumigated all 18 greens with methyl bromide to kill any and all remnants of the two-year-old Mini-Verde bermudagrass.”



Pictured here on June 25th, 2013, the freshly re-grassed practice putting green sprigged with TifEagle bermudagrass.

“A couple days later they pulled the tarps off the greens and then aerated them once again, but this time using an aerator with solid tines, which punches holes without removing the plugs. This essentially softens the dirt making it ready to plant without disturbing the greens’ contours.”

“We then sprigged all 18 greens with TifEagle bermudagrass which is the same type of grass as on the New Trump Nine. Our sprigging rate was 35 bushels per thousand, which we knew was high,” said Trump, “but we wanted to be open for play as soon as possible.”

“A Smooth Grown-In at TIGC”

Mr. Trump continued, saying “We sprigged on the June 25th and 26th and hand-watered the sprigs immediately because of the heat. Our guys literally followed the tractors as they cut the sprigs in so we could keep the surface temperatures cool. The key to growing in good greens is keeping proper moisture on the greens so we watered the greens basically every 30 minutes, but just for about four minutes at a time to keep the plant wet.” Interrupting Mr. Trump I asked “All day, every day including at night?” “No, not at night,” answered Mr. Trump. “But we did it all day every day for about a week and then we started backing them off.”

“This was done with the automated sprinkler system,” he said. “We have five sprinkler heads around each of the 18 greens. The superintendent programmed the watering schedule into the computerized system and then had his assistants running around the course double-checking to see that they were working properly.”



July 3, 2013 - TIGC maintenance worker makes the first pass with the roller on the newly sprigged TifEagle bermudagrass only eight days after being planted.



First mowing of TifEagle bermudagrass on putting green eight days after planting, July 3, 2013.

Then, after eight days, the superintendent, rolled the greens to smooth them and then mowed them with the mowers set at 2/10 of an inch. We also initiated our fertility program at the same time we started mowing using a combination of organic sources, micros and quick release urea to grow it in.”



Photographed 1-2-2014, The putting green in front of the clubhouse at Trump International Golf Club only 6 months after being planted with TifEagle bermudagrass.

I asked Mr. Trump, “Six months later, now that they are full grown, how low do you cut them?” Then Mr. Trump said, “Right now, January 2nd, 2014, the 18 greens of the Championship course are cut at 0.120 (point twelve) inches which is a little under 1/8 of an inch. And probably by March we’ll go down to one tenth of an inch.” Then Trump added, “We don’t want to go too low right now because this time of year our daylight hours are short, and we want a little more plant material to absorb the light. Because if you cut them too low, they could get thin and you could lose your greens, especially in the first year after being rebuilt”

“They sprigged the greens on June 25th and 26th, and it only took about 90 days for the TifEagle to get well established,” Trump said. “But, they didn’t start playing on them until October 18th. So, all together it took three and a half months for the 18 greens to really get filled in. Now, after only one growing season, this grass has already come into its own,” said Trump. “Our members love our TifEagle greens.”

Since the superintendent had mentioned the Mini-Verde bermudagrass having some color inconsistencies, I then asked Mr. Trump if the Mini-Verde had mutated. Without a moment of hesitation, Mr. Trump said, “It’s a well known fact that members of the Tifdwarf family of turfgrasses have a severe tendency to either become contaminated with off-type plants or to mutate and change their characteristics. And of course this problem is accentuated when trying to achieve increased green speeds. Since Mini-Verde is also an off-type of Tifdwarf we now believe it would have most likely changed its genetics in the future.”

“TifEagle, however,” said Mr. Trump, “which was released by Dr. Wayne Hanna, a plant geneticist, in the spring of 1998 has different genetics than the rest of the Tifdwarf/Tifgreen family. The reason for this is that it has been genetically modified through cobalt radiation.”

“To date, the number of off-types in TifEagle production fields have been limited and there is currently no documentation of a "mutation off-type" in a TifEagle green. There is thus a strong case for golf courses with contaminated Tifdwarf off-types on their greens to

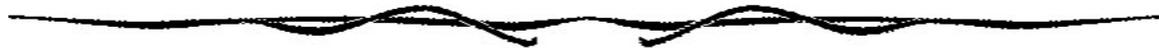
change to TifEagle.”



A tableside view of the new TifEagle practice putting green and the driving range from the patio of the clubhouse at Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

“We had several samples of our Mini-Verde tested, said Trump, “but the results were inconclusive and we weren't going to wait any longer. Even though our greens were still beautiful and extremely fast and true, we know for sure we had some color inconsistencies and therefore by our standards they could be considered contaminated.”

“The greens at Trump International Golf Club must always be perfect and now I know they are,” said Mr. Trump. “This TifEagle is the same grass we used to build the New Trump Nine as well as to rebuild Trump Doral and Trump National Jupiter, so we definitely know what we're dealing with now.”



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