

Flat drainage pipe takes hold

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Operating on the philosophy that it is more profitable to reduce expenses through innovation than by cheapening the product, a growing number of golf course projects are installing or remodeling putting greens with a new drainage technique

The key ingredient is a flat, perforated corrugated plastic pipe called AdvanEDGE, made by Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc.

(ADS) here. Developed in 1988 as an edge drain to be installed vertically alongside highways, AdvanEDGE reportedly has about twice the soil contact area of 4-inch round pipe, and will collect and drain water almost twice as quickly.

In the early 1990s, football stadiums began laying the pipe horizontally under the playing turf and found that this accelerated water collection from heavy rainfalls. The

concept has since spread to other recreational areas, and now golf courses.

Dr. Michael Hurdzan of Hurdzan-Fry Design here first adapted this product to the unique requirements of putting greens. David Whelchel, a project manager with Hurdzan-Fry, said anything that will make greens better and less costly to build will have bottom-line benefits to course managers.

"The flat-pipe idea just made a lot of

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Audubon

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1995 became the third course to earn Audubon Signature status. "Just about everything we've done as a participant in the Signature Program has or will have a positive economic benefit at some point as a payback.

"Everything we look at — every project, every capital expenditure, every operational decision — we have to consider on the basis of the payback. Does it enhance the value of the club, the value that our members perceive? Does it make for a better round of golf, pay for itself and bring money back to us? ... The programs we've undertaken have, by and large, demonstrated positive payback — some long-term, some short-term."

"At the end of the day, if you look long-term, I venture to say we're probably saving \$20,000 a year on water, energy, etc.," said George Kelley, co-owner of Stevinson (Calif.) Ranch Golf Club, which gained Signature status in September 1996. "I'm very surprised more developers have not joined the program. I believe they think it's like getting in bed with the big bad wolf."

"It's ironic that a golf course will irrigate 125 acres of turf, which costs a lot of money to build and maintain, and then say they don't have the money to be in the Signature Program," said Tim Hiers, superintendent at Collier's Reserve in Naples, Fla., the first facility in the country to become fully certified. "People will spend extravagant amounts of money in areas that many times will not have any benefit from Day One or forever. Or, some people will hide behind the statement: 'We don't have an unlimited budget.'"

"But, if you're a public golf course and think you can't afford to join, think about it. The intent is to use less water, pesticides, fuel, electricity, resources; to me that means spending less money. So how do you argue the program? It's because you don't really understand it."

The option of force is out. Facilities that join Audubon's programs sign no contract.

"If the program were ever required, it wouldn't work because the spirit would be gone," Hiers said. "It's a cooperative program. They want to attract people who already desire to do what Audubon wants them to do. If you heart's right and your intentions are right, you don't need a contract."

Discovering the heart of potential members perhaps is the best way to determine their membership. "There has to be some way to strengthen the commitment, but I think Audubon will have to do that in the early screening process," Hiers said.

And, indeed, Dodson said: "I'm increasingly turning down people who want to join."



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Flat pipe

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sense to us," he said. "With its bigger surface area, it does a better job of taking water out of the bottom of the all-sand California green profile than conventional round pipe and gravel."

But the main reason flat-pipe technique is attracting attention, according to Welchel, is that "it saves a lot in construction costs. Although the material cost of AdvanEDGE is higher than round pipe, no trenches need to be dug, no gravel backfill to buy, and no trench spoils to dispose of.

"Our experience," he said, "shows that the installed cost of flat pipe is about half the cost of traditional drain pipe, maybe even less. This can add up to \$30,000 to \$40,000 in savings for 18 holes."

AdvanEDGE pipe is normally sold with a geotextile fabric wrap to filter out soil fines. If the greens mixture and surrounding soils are relatively free from migratory fines, Hurdzan-Fry permits the pipe to be installed without the filter wrap. ADS can produce the pipe with narrower "sand slot" perforations. ADS also offers a standard line of couplings and tees designed specifically for horizontal installation.

Kids course

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where they could take their children to play the game.

"I always suggested a par-3 course or driving range," Ridge said. "Where else was there?"

"We're very excited because this will be testing the waters [for similar, future projects]," said Mike Ridge, his cousin Jack's vice president in Ridge Golf Design and assistant to the president of Club Pro. "The whole idea behind this is to let kids experience the

game and fall in love with it by actually playing it. It gives them goals, thrills, the challenge, a perception of the game. They're not taking a dozen shots to the green with daddy. They want a chance to make a par or birdie. That's what will keep them coming back."

Although they fought horrible weather, the Ridges said a layout like the Kids Course at Bob-O-Link could be built in a span of two weeks in perfect weather. At Bob-O-Link they simply added far-forward tees on 13 holes and used five ladies' tees that are in strategic places, then built bunkers situated for children's play. Kid-sized benches and ball-washers at the tees, and 5-foot-high flag sticks for a second set of kids' holes on the greens add to the built-for-children feeling, as do the kids' scorecards.

The opening on Father's Day was special, Mike Ridge said, because "we wanted the kids to feel it is their course in a sense that Dad is their guest."

Jack Ridge explained: "By installing new sets of tees and the strategic location of new bunkers, hazards and mounding, a routing was being created which, in essence, resulted in a course within a course, with its own distinct character that does not compromise the integrity of the existing full-sized layout."

A PGA professional who has given hundreds of lessons to children, Jack Ridge designed the Kids Course with a good feel for how far they hit the ball. He and Mike figured 85 yards on a drive. Therefore, a hole from 85 to 160 yards long is a par-4. Longer than 160 yards is a par-5. An adults' straight-away par-4 of 385 yards can also be a double-dogleg 275-yard par-5 for kids.

Bob-O-Link's Kids Course is a par-74 layout measuring 3,100 yards. Looking forward to other kids' courses, Mike Ridge said more than one set of children's tees can be built per hole — perhaps having one for 3- to 6-year-old and one for 7- to 10-year-olds.



TO: Robert Sackman, GCS

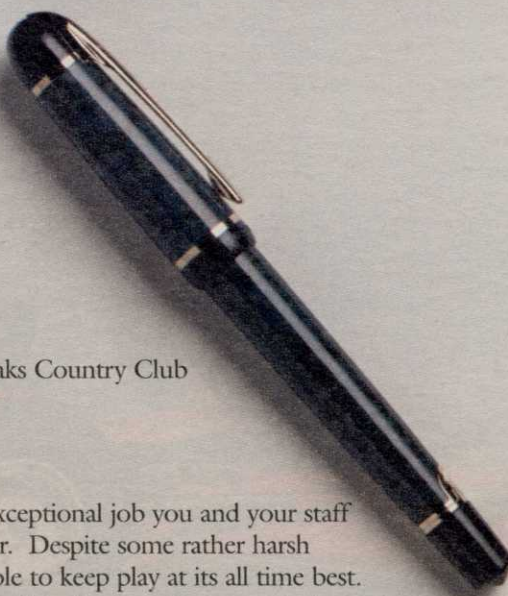
FROM: The Greens Committee, Tall Oaks Country Club

RE: CONGRATULATIONS!

Dear Bob,

We want to thank you for the exceptional job you and your staff did with the course this past year. Despite some rather harsh weather conditions, you were able to keep play at its all time best. In fact, guests from surrounding clubs frequently commented on what great shape our course was in and wondered what your secret is. We know it's a lot more than magic, but whatever you do — aside from your hard work — it has made the membership very proud.

We look forward to another season with you at the helm!



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