

A Visit With Doyle Brookshire



Doyle Brookshire is now in his 10th year serving as the Ponca City Country Club Golf Course Superintendent. He is one of only 15 certified course superintendents in the state of Oklahoma.

Doyle recently took some time out of his busy schedule to visit with us about the golf course.

How many full-time golf course employees do you have during the growing season?

"We have 12 to 14 employees at work on any given day. That's down from 18 employees a couple of years ago. Several of our workers have been with us for many years and are very dedicated and experienced. Also, for the past 4 years, we have worked closely with Bridgeway in utilizing some of their folks. It has really been a "win-win" for the Bridgeway men and for us because they are mature, hard working and very appreciative of having a good, outdoor job. Overall, I am very proud of every member of my staff.

We recently had the "Summer Sizzler" and the O.G.A. Senior State Amateur golf tournaments at the Club. The out-of-town players were very impressed with the condition of the entire course. The greens seem to be a little smoother, slightly quicker and not as soft when compared to previous years.

When all of our greens died in the early 90's they were replaced with SR-1020 bentgrass. At the time, it was considered to be an affordable, high quality grass. Unfortunately, the SR-1020 variety has lots of poa annua and thatch problems and is rarely used anymore. Most golf courses put down a pre-emergence weed control twice a year, but on our course we now do it every 4 months in an effort to control the poa annua. We also verticut our greens 15 to 20 times a year instead of 3 to 4 times a year like the majority of courses do. Verticutting helps to cut the seed heads off of the tops of the poa annua plants.

To be honest, our greens will never be as smooth, as fast, or as firm as we would all like them to be. We have to keep them watered more than normal to ensure that the moisture passes through the thatch and reaches the grass roots. Thatch is a mat of clippings, cuttings and stems that builds up between the grass blades and their root systems. We verticut and then mow the greens in an effort to clean-up and dispose of as much debris as we can. Our greens have been and will continue to be one of our top priorities.



Is all of the golf course maintenance equipment still in good shape?

Our golf course budget is actually less now than it was when I started at the Club in 2000. For that reason, we have not purchased or leased any new course equipment for several years and we have had to reduce the number of golf course workers that are on the payroll. We are also very committed to always buying all of our fertilizers and chemicals at the lowest price possible.

Most of our current turf mowing equipment has about 6000 hours of use already. The majority of private clubs trade their mowers and aerification equipment in after they have been used 4000 hours. Our maintenance workers do a great job of servicing the mowing equipment and keeping it in as good of shape as possible. We are also mowing a little less often than we did in the past. Purchasing efficient, high quality golf course maintenance equipment is going to be one of our biggest challenges as we move forward in this economic downturn.

Speaking of high quality, the recently completed work on Pecan Road looks really good. Your thoughts?

The road is very much improved and looks great. Adding the new concrete curbs on the sides of the road has increased our mowing time along the Club's property line from Juanito to Lake Road dramatically. It used to take one worker 3 hours to mow and 2 hours to weed-eat the entire length of the road. Now, with the curbs added, it is taking about 18 hours to mow and edge along the east side of the road because alot of it has to be done with a push mower and weed-eater instead of with just a riding mower. The large majority of the rain water run-off on Pecan is now being diverted to the club's property because of some drainage culverts that were added during the road remodeling project. That will probably add to the drainage problems that we already have with the creek on the south side of hole #13. It could also increase our mosquito population on the golf course!



Many of our better golfers like the holes where you have narrowed the width of the fairways. Some of our higher handicappers think the course is too tough now. Why have some of the fairways been narrowed?

It was a recommendation from the Club's golf committee a couple of years back. Our course is very short (6400 yards) by today's standards. The goal was to make the course play a little bit tougher. Also, we have had problems maintaining a high-quality, fairway height turf grass along the edges of the tree-lined fairways on some of our holes. The west side of the fairway on hole #12 is a good example of this. Letting the existing grass grow to rough height instead of fairway height increases its durability and helps eliminate bare dirt spots along the edges of our existing fairways. We will probably widen some of the fairways again after the growing season ends.



It appears that the trees on the golf course are in much better shape than in years past. Are you doing anything special to keep the trees healthy?

We owe a great deal of thanks to Mother Nature. We have had rains at the perfect time throughout the entire summer and have not had any hail storms or extremely high winds! We also do our best to keep the trees pruned and trimmed in a timely manner. Many of our trees are very, very old. The golf course was built in 1928 and some of the trees were here before the course was built. We have lost almost 50 Pine and Oak trees over the past couple of years. Oak and Pine trees have been dying all over the southwestern part of the United States and the horticulturists have not discovered a cure for the problem as of yet. We will strive to plant as many new trees this fall as our budget allows.

How is the repair work on the back tee box of hole #14 coming along?



The grass has not really taken hold like we had hoped. This fall we will plant some rye and bentgrass and give it a try. The problem is that when the tee box was originally built, dredged sludge from the pond on hole #18 was used instead of high quality top soil. We may have to start over next spring and totally rebuild the entire tee box with high quality turf and fresh top soil.

It appears that many of our golfers driving carts on the golf course are not following the established golf cart rules as stringently as in years past. I am talking about the 90 degree rule on the entire course and the cart-paths-only rule on holes #1, #6, #7, #8, #14 and #16.

We have had several outside golf tournaments this year with many guests that do not know what our PCCC golf cart rules entail. When the PCCC members see guests driving golf carts all over the course, a few of them think that they can do the very same thing. A golf cart driven too close to a green or across a wet fairway can do a great deal of damage in just a few seconds. It's up to all of us to politely remind our fellow golfers of the course golf cart rules when we see someone not adhering to them.

Anything else you would like to say to the PCCC golfing members?

I really enjoy working here at the Club and I sincerely appreciate everyone's support. I am always willing to listen to the ideas, suggestions and opinions of our golfing members. Just give me a call at 580-762-5577 or drop by the Golf Maintenance Shop located east of hole #10.

