



APRIL 2010

REPORT BACK - 2010 U.S. MASTERS TOURNAMENT

I was very privileged to have been invited back to be on the golf course maintenance team at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta Georgia U.S.A.

When I was still working at Leopard Creek Country Club I got to know Mr Ivor Jones, a member at LC and also the only South African member at Augusta National. He asked me one day on the driving range how my studies were and about my future plans. He then responded with: "I think its time you go to the Masters..."

I had a long route, Durban-Johannesburg-Washington-Atlanta and then a 2 hour drive to Augusta. Its not so bad going there with the excitement in you but still tiring...I arrived there Saturday afternoon, had a good nights rest and attended the volunteer meeting on Sunday.

At the meeting we went through the duties of each volunteer for the week and all the do's and don'ts. It is very well planned and organized so obviously not their first time.

As from Monday, the first practice round, we were in tournament routine, to make sure everybody was prepared for a perfect tournament.

We started off at 05:30 with a meeting at the workshop where Brad Owen, the Golf Course Superintendent briefly went through some important notes for the day. My morning job was bunker care. Four groups of six each would be the normal for both fairway and greenside bunker raking.

On foot with a rake, heading for the 1st hole, the team leader had a cart with "wet-rakes" and a blower. The bunkers that we did were fairway bunkers no 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 18 and the greenside bunkers on no 17. The team to finish first helps out on the par 3 course. We were normally done by 09:00 when you can have breakfast and some time off.

One 'o clock, I was on "back pack" duty on the 17th green. One or two volunteers are allocated to each green ensuring there's no sand or any debris on the putting surface through the whole day. A whipping pole and a blower are your tools and the Rules Official is close by.

Behind the field of play a group of about 10 volunteers went through the course repairing fairway divots. Thereafter everyone meets at the workshop and check-out at

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19:30. On Thursday, it was windy and with a thunder storm that night made the clean-up a bit more intense the next morning.

The greens are out of this world, a triple cut and roll each morning and the same in the afternoon behind the field is what makes them so quick. On television it's not always possible to see the undulations.

The fairways are cut morning and afternoon with 12 TORO fairway mowers, in a line following each other which means there is no striping on the fairways and it's not a very long process. The fairways and semi-rough are cut in opposite directions and the definition with dark fairways and light semi-rough is how you see it from the tee box.

Amazingly I did not see even one sandpro bunker rake machine anywhere at the workshops. All the bunkers are hand raked. Steep and deep sand faces, with white silica sand. The bunker faces are compacted every evening by wetting and rolling with a "squeegee" roller. In case of any debris it gets blown out every morning prior to raking.

Marsh Benson is the former Superintendent, now Director of golf course and grounds at the National. He is also the man who invented the Sub-Air system. The sub-air is a 7.5kw electric motor driving a specialized fan that can either suck or blow. It is attached to the drainage system outlet of each green and is often used to "vacuum" extra moisture through the green, for a dry and quick surface.

Augusta had a particularly cold winter. The course was still covered with snow about 3ft deep and that only 52 days prior the tournament. The lush green golf course is actually a "cynodon" course, but gets heavily scarified and "over seeded" with rye grass just over a month before tournament. The rye grass will die in a couple months.

It's a very elite golf club with a lot of tradition and history. The "green jacket" is the trademark. Apart from the Masters champion who receives a jacket every year, the members are known as "the green jackets" and they are seen with the legendary jacket around the course during the tournament.

With the best golfers and the unbelievable golf shots one witnesses during this week, it's easily justifiable why it's called "The Masters". Phil Mickelson, the 2010 champion, had a super round on Saturday. He eagled the 13th, 14th and nearly eagled the 15th. Tiger drew a lot of attention and the biggest crowd. He is still the ultimate golfer. I was very lucky to have seen Arnold Palmer driving close by me on the 17th with the chairman wearing their green jackets. All the patrons just stopped and raised their hands with respect for the legend who is also the honorary starter together with Jack Nicklaus for the Masters tournament.

I would hereby like to thank all the Homeowners of Prince's Grant who made it possible for me to be a part of this phenomenal experience, I found it very educational, and possible to improve in my department on the golf course, my staff management and a general standard of all work being done.

**Thank you
Danie Kok
Golf Course Superintendent**

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