

APRIL IN AUGUSTA

WHAT MAKES THE MASTERS GREEN?

Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia may not be the toughest course on the pro golf tour. But the Masters Tournament held there every April is probably the goal most pros have at the top of their win list. Gary Player won it last year and has called Augusta the best-conditioned course he have ever played.

"Bubba" Luke appreciates that comment. He has more than a passing interest in the Masters and Augusta, because the course pros say has the truest lies and the best

putting surfaces is his responsibility. Bubba, or James F. if you are being formal, is the superintendent at Augusta.

"I'd be lying if I said there wasn't more pressure here than at other courses," Luke told GOLFDOM. "I'm not trying to sound boastful or anything, the fact is that we have more problems here because of the Masters. Some things have to be done differently because of the Masters; it comes down to having the course better-manicured than most. Hadley (his right-hand

man, Hadley Plemmons) and I don't have anything on most superintendents, we don't do anything most superintendents couldn't do, but our standards have to be a little higher because of the Masters."

Bubba grew up on golf courses. His father, Marion I. Luke, was superintendent at the course for 15 years after World War Two. Then he moved to Vice President Nelson Rockefeller's course in Puerto Rico.

But back to Bubba. He has been at Augusta five years, three as head superintendent, not to mention 14 years working at the Masters. He is obviously doing something right. Here are some of the main points made by Luke in an interview with GOLFDOM.

All prices are up an average of 20 percent this year, but you do what you can; he thinks he has a top-notch irrigation system, and attributes much of his success to that system; upkeep of the greens is the most visible part of his job, and with this in mind he buys new greens mowers every three years; he is big on soil samples, and does not understand how a superintendent can think he is doing his best job without them; he fertilizes his fairways monthly, and does other things he can do because his course is closed from June through September. But come March 1 there is no busier man than Bubba — preparing for the Masters to be held



The clubhouse of Augusta National Golf Club



James "Bubba" Luke, superintendent at Augusta National

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in mid-April — and he says he could not do the job he does without his hard-working crew.

Augusta totals 365 acres with 130 acres maintained by Luke and his crew. This consists of the main 18-hole course, plus a par-three, nine-hole course that sponsors local tournaments every Wednesday.

The course is a 328 Bermuda hybrid base overseeded with "Penn-fine" perennial ryegrass on the

greens and tees, and with "Penn-lawn" fescue on the fairways. This year is the first Augusta has gone to "Feldspar" sand in its traps, the same sand used by Vance Price at Tanglewood Golf Club, in North Carolina, site of last year's PGA Championship. Luke says he has gotten at least 100 requests from other superintendents about his sand. More than 40,000 azaleas are planted throughout the course for

color, in addition to the other 17 plants for which the 18 holes are named. There are no car paths on the course.

Luke utilizes a Toro automatic irrigation system which has the capability of watering greens, tees and fairways separately. He has 725 heads total on the par-three and the main course. One of his workers, Herb Turner, is trained to troubleshoot the system, and spends most of his work week providing maintenance for the system. continued

42 YEARS AT THE MASTERS

Probably the best-known shot in all golf tournament history occurred in the fourth round of the 1935 Masters. Gene Sarazen holed out the 15th hole with a 220-yard, four wood shot for a double eagle. The stroke enabled him to tie Craig Wood for first place, and then set the stage for his ultimate victory in a play-off round. Bruce Devlin became the only other player in Masters history to score a double eagle when he also holed out on his second shot using a four wood on the par-five 8th hole during the first round of the 1967 Masters.

The youngest player to win the Masters was Jack Nicklaus in 1963 at the age of 23. The second youngest was Byron Nelson in 1937 at the age of 25 and two months, and the third was Gary Player in 1961 at age 25 and five months.

Craig Wood shot an 88 in the first round of the 1936 tournament, then scored 67 in the second — a difference of 21 strokes.

Frank Walsh used up 12 strokes on the 8th hole in 1935. Herman Barron took an 11 on the 16th in 1950 and Dow Finsterwald took an 11 on the 12th in 1951.

Herman Keiser three-putted the 18th green on the final round of the 1946 tournament, thereby opening the door for Ben Hogan to overtake him. But Hogan, although he had a good chance to score a birdie that would have given him the championship by a one-stroke margin, also three-putted — leaving Keiser in sole possession of first place.

During the first round of the 1947 tournament, Jimmy Demaret played a shot out of deep water in front of the 15th green. The ball

came to rest within four feet of the pin and Demaret holed out for a birdie. He went on to win the tournament.

During the third round of the 1953 Masters, Count de Bendor (better known as Johnny de Forest) found his ball lodged in the bank of the brook in front of the 13th green. After carefully surveying the situation, Johnny decided, although the stream was running rather full, that he could play the ball. Thereupon he stripped off his left shoe and sock and rolled his pants above his knee. Johnny next, very carefully, planted the bare foot on the bank and stepped into the deep water with his well-shod right foot. The spectators who witnessed this incident will long remember the look of incredulity on the affable Count's face as he realized what he had done.

While playing the fourth round in 1954, Al Besselink hit his tee shot into the water on the 12th. Finding that the ball had come to rest on a small sandbar in midstream, Al waded out to the spot and succeeded in playing his ball to the green. Then, following the unconscious dictate of long habit, he carefully smoothed out the indentation he had made, leaving an unblemished sandbar for the next golfer.

Cary Middlecoff's putt for an eagle at the 13th hole during the second round of the 1955 Masters was estimated, by common consent of Middlecoff and the writers, at 75 feet in length. That this is a conservative estimate may be judged by the fact that one writer, who paced off the distance, arrived at a figure of 86 feet. Considering that there are relatively few greens in existence big

enough to even permit a putt of this length, Middlecoff's must go down in golf history as one of the all-time long putts of major league competition.

Gene Sarazen and George Fazio were first off the tee in the final round of the 1947 tournament. They finished the 18 holes in one hour and 57 minutes, Gene scoring 70. In 1960 George Bayer and Jack Fleck went around in one hour and 52 minutes and made scores of 72 and 74.

Two fine golfers encountered almost incredible difficulties during the fourth round of the 1951 tournament. Sam Snead began the day tied with Skee Riegel for the lead with 211 but went from a third round 68 to a fourth round 80. Surprising as this was, William (Dynamite) Goodloe, Jr. started the same round leading the amateur field but followed his 72 of the previous day with a concluding 88.

Ed Oliver, Jr. and Hogan waged a classic medal play duel when they were paired together on the third day of the 1953 Masters. From the moment Oliver birdied the first hole, the twosome produced some of the most spectacular golf ever seen at Augusta. Hogan shot 32-34-66 to Oliver's 34-33-67. The best ball score for the two was 31-29-60.

In 1957 Byron Nelson put his tee shot into the water at the 16th hole, then hitting a second ball brought off a superb seven-iron shot. The ball struck the flagpole squarely, about a foot above the cup and bounced back into the water. Nelson said this was the only time in his career he had had a shot strike a pin and end up in a water hazard. □

Greens are naturally one of the biggest concerns of any superintendent, and Luke is no different. He said he keeps the greens mowed at $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch for regular use and $\frac{9}{64}$ during the Masters. He does not use a triplex mower, but rather a walking mower for the greens, because he says he gets a better cut. He rings the greens with a triplex, however. He buys new greens mowers every three years, sells the old ones rather than trade them in.

"The greens mowers are really the only piece of equipment that we try to rotate and plan to replace on a steady basis," he said. "We do have a full-time mechanic, however, and he keeps a card file on the amount of maintenance done on each piece of equipment, and also keeps record of

how much is spent on maintenance for all equipment. This way, if we find that we are putting too much money in one particular piece of equipment, then we have better information to provide when we have to explain why we want to replace it."

Luke fertilizes his greens twice a month with a fertilizer mix based largely on the results of soil samples he does regularly. "If a superintendent does not run soil samples, there is no way he can tell by looking the shape his turf is in," he said. "This year, for example, our soil is very high in phosphorous, and we are using a low-phosphorous fertilizer. We also keep a record of soil samples over the years, and this has proved helpful." He spreads his

granular fertilizer on the greens in two directions, dividing the amount to be spread into two portions.

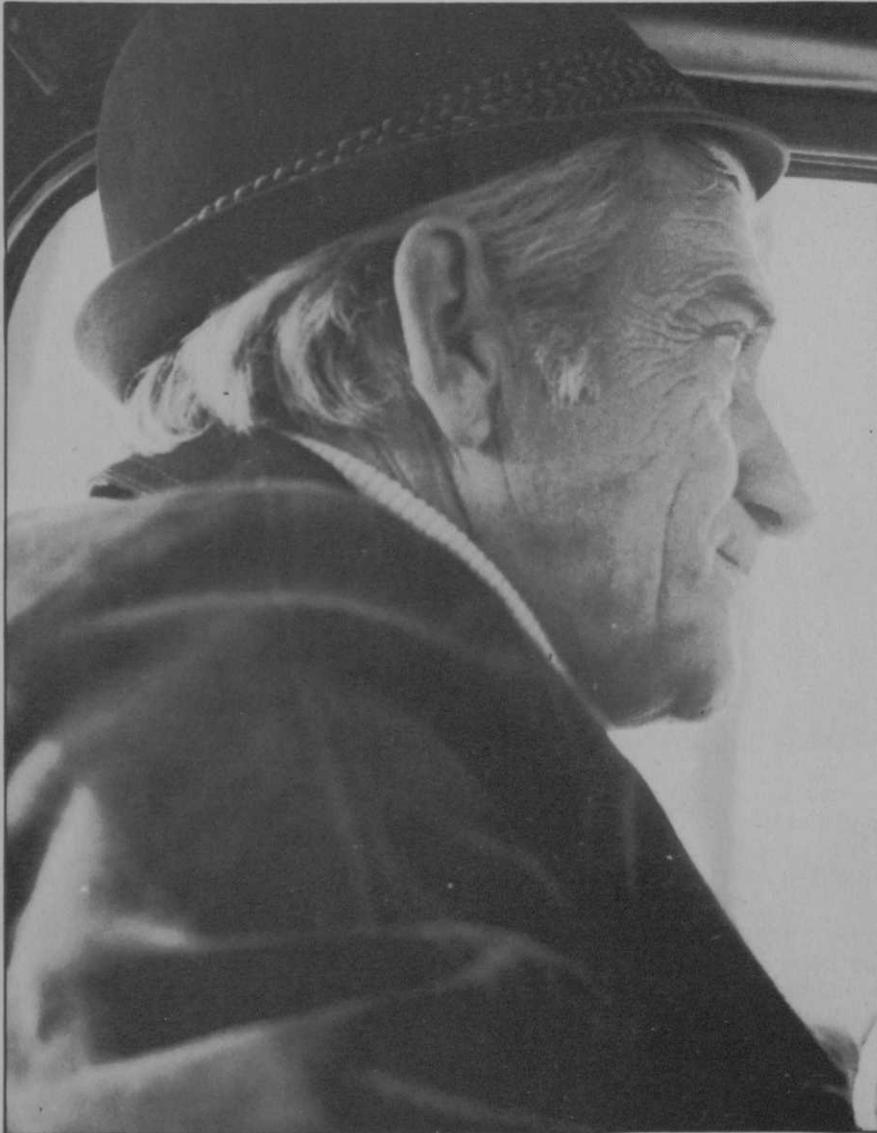
With fungicides, Luke is on a preventative program. In warm weather he sprays his greens about every 10 days. "We vary the kinds of fungicides we use," he said, "because I think if you stick with the same brand, the ground may become immune."

He and his crew aerate the greens three times during the summer when the course is closed. They also verticut the greens about six or seven times during the summer. When they aerate, they use as large a tine as possible, usually about $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch, but says the reason they can do this is because the course is closed.

For their size, Luke says traps are one of the most expensive areas of the course. His course only has 44 sand traps, and he is experimenting with a motorized trap rake, although many of the traps are still done by hand. He sprays the many trees on the course in a preventative program to stop disease, and does not have to replace too many each year, although they are continuously planting new trees, especially before the Masters. He uses an aquatic weed control about three times a year on the water which comes into play for five holes.

Tees are fertilized as often as the greens at Augusta — every day. As a rule, Luke uses about 12 pounds of nitrogen a year on his tees and greens, and about eight pounds of nitrogen a year on his fairways. He also mows his fairways daily, and fertilizes the fairways monthly. "I know this is not the way most superintendents do it, but this is my theory here," Luke said. "If we could take our allotment of fertilizer and apply $\frac{1}{365}$ of it every day, we would. This would give the best growth and color. But this is of course impractical, so we try to apply it as often as we can, which is monthly in our case." He aerates the fairways, sweeps and verticuts twice during the summer. Roughs are cut one inch for regular play and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch during the Masters.

As mentioned before, the big
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Luke has been at Augusta five years, three as the head man.



Luke with his right-hand man, Hadley Plemmons

push begins March 1 to prepare for the Masters, although Luke and his people begin meeting with tournament committees about two months before to begin planning what is to be done. "From those first meetings, the pressure begins to build," Luke said. "You do what you can, you give it your best shot, and then things can still go wrong, and something could go wrong right during the week of the tournament. You get the course to the point where you want it, say in late March or early April, and you wish the tournament was going to start the next day, because there is always the possibility of something going wrong."

Luke is involved as a director of the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Assn., and is also a member of the advisory committee of the national Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America. "I think we have one of the finest regional chapters in the country," he says of the Georgia group, "with our educational programs, and annual short course at the University of Georgia. We have some of the finest speakers and we deal strictly with Georgia problems, so it is a big help to members."

"I think the National is a fine organization," he said, "and the show in New Orleans was one of the



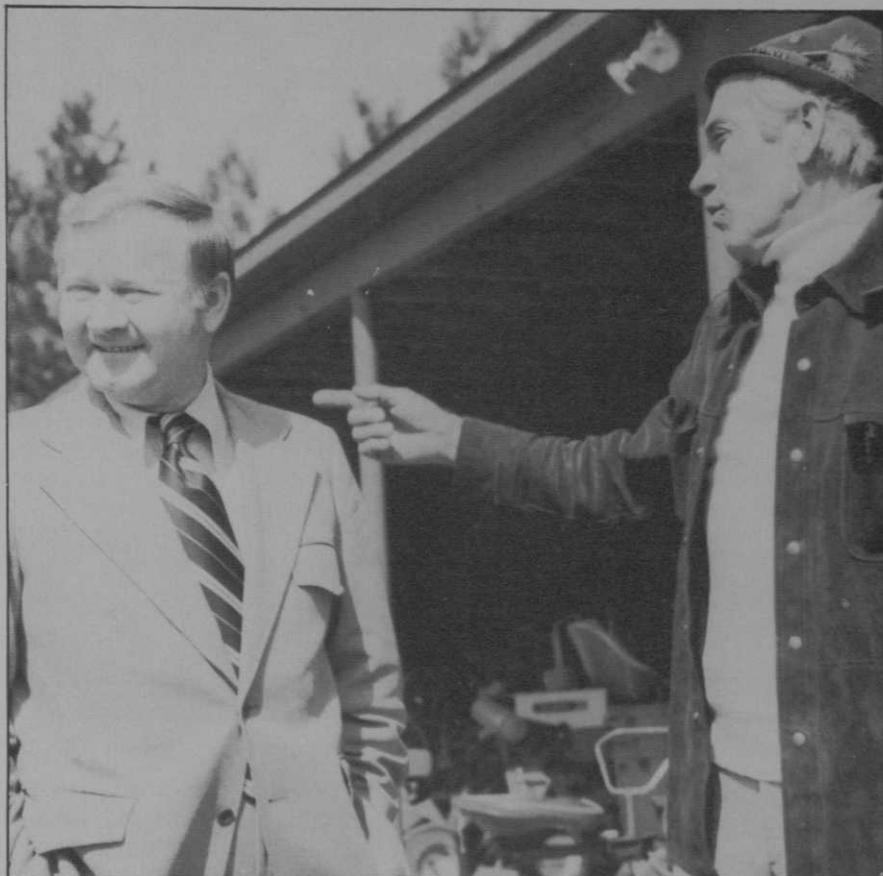
Entrance to the stately southern Augusta clubhouse

best in years. I always like the show because I try to keep up with the latest equipment, and the show is an opportunity to see all of the equipment together and decide what you might want to have demonstrated to you later."

Luke attended many of the educational sessions at the New Orleans show, and said they also were excellent. One session he took a particular interest in was the one on the general manager concept. "All I can say about it is that it didn't apply to me in my situation here in Augusta. From the tournament and club officials down, we work more together than for each other. There couldn't be a better man to work with than (tournament director) Col. (David) Davis, and the same goes for club manager Philip Wahl."

It stands to reason. A tournament like the Masters could not come off as smoothly as it does every year without the kind of co-operation Luke says there is at Augusta. But when all the organizational details are out of the way, when all the press facilities and television lines are set up, and the galleries provided for, what it comes down to is the turf that the most prestigious tournament in the country is being played on. And that is where Bubba Luke feels most at home.

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Above: Luke with Col. David Davis, tournament director of the Masters

Below: Luke's year-round, full-time crew. From left, Homer Lasenby, Luke, Odis Bush, Johnny Gibson, Clarence Stokes, Dan Tate, William Johnson, Claude Flowers, Randy Vinson, Grady Thurmond, Ike Stokes, Charles Sullivan and Mac Willis

