

# Washing Your Cares Away

Gaining an equipment wash rack upgrade as part of the turf management center master plan.

BY JOSHUA CONWAY



Failing drains and stagnant water plagued Prairie Dunes Country Club's wash pad before the upgrade.



**P**rairie Dunes Country Club is an 18-hole, links-style golf course located in Hutchinson, Kansas. Built in 1937, 225 acres of the club's 334.5 acres are managed as prairie grassland habitat.

Superintendent Stan George had long felt the club needed a new wash rack system. The old wash pad consisted of two hoses on a 400-square-foot, irregular concrete base. Constructed from concrete left over from past projects, the uneven surface caused the accumulation of rinse water on the pad itself. In addition, the drains were failing, allowing unfiltered rinse water to stagnate above ground and potentially degrade groundwater.

Despite the inadequacies of the wash pad, George found himself in a situation many superintendents would find

familiar; the club did not feel that it could allocate the funds to upgrade the system. His opportunity to push for the project finally came when the club decided to build an addition onto the Turf Management Center in preparation for the 2002 US Women's Open. He initially proposed the wash rack as a stand-alone project, which was rejected. Finally, through several years of planning, convincing, politicking, and allocating funds, George finally

ensured the master plan would include a new wash rack area. The entire Turf Management Center upgrade, which included the addition of 5,000 square feet of offices, meeting room, locker rooms, equipment storage, and the new wash rack, began in January 2001 and was completed in May 2001.

The Turf Management Center addition was designed to create a U shape, with the wash rack located in the courtyard between the two portions of

the building. This wash rack position ensures that every piece of equipment passes through the area prior to entering the buildings, making equipment washing more efficient. Surrounded on three sides and covered with a roof, the 2,400-square-foot area also provides extra equipment storage when needed, such as during the Women's Open.

water separator tank, much like a septic tank. The filtered water is discharged into a leach field.

Staff blows off equipment with a backpack blower and collects the dry clippings. Clippings that are washed off are allowed to dry overnight for easy removal from in front of the screens, shoveled into two five-gallon buckets, and brought to the compost

its place, he would install another full-length screen instead of the one-third width pre-screen that is incorporated in the bumper. "I have found that this pre-screen performs unsatisfactorily compared to the full-width screen behind it," he says. Except for this one minor detail, the staff has been extremely pleased with the operation, traffic flow, location, and results of the



The redesigned and greatly improved wash pad at Prairie Dunes Country Club provides adequate collection and filtering of wash water.

Originally based on a wash rack system George saw at Pinehurst, the club slightly changed the initial architectural plan to meet their specific needs. The original design called for four wash stations that drained to a collection/filtering system. Instead, the club moved the collection system into the center of the courtyard and doubled the number of wash stations. Each of the eight stations has a separate hose supplied from the irrigation system; a backpack blower, pail, and shovel for clipping removal; and a "safety stick" (mandatory for adjusting reel parts during cleaning rather than using hands).

The design of the system is quite simple. The concrete pad is slightly sloped to enhance rinse water and clipping movement into the collection pit from both sides. Rinse water is double screened to collect clippings before passing through a buried oil/

pile. The wash rack's proximity to the maintenance building creates an incentive for the maintenance staff to clean the pit daily, or unpleasant odors will become prevalent.

Originally, the pit area was created to be large enough that a skid loader could be driven down into the sloped pit to remove clippings. Although this is possible, the staff does not attempt this procedure any longer because they felt uncomfortable with the close proximity of the loader to the irrigation line (located above ground and attached to the safety railing). Additionally, they found it to be unnecessary due to the small amount of clippings to be removed if one is diligent about removing them daily.

If they were to do this project over, George said he would remove the concrete bumper installed just prior to the screening that was designed to protect the screens from the loader bucket. In

new wash rack facility. Aside from removing screened clippings regularly, ongoing maintenance also has been minimal.

Although the final cost was incorporated into the construction of the entire facility, the approximate cost of the wash rack was \$30,000. From the members' perspective, although most do not visit the Turf Management Center (even during several open houses), those who do visit are impressed with the professional appearance and neat storage areas, and they appreciate the wash rack as one way to care for their significant investment in equipment.

*JOSHUA CONWAY is the Education and Communications Manager for Audubon International. He can be contacted at [jconway@auduboninternational.org](mailto:jconway@auduboninternational.org). For more information on the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses, call (518) 767-9051, extension 12.*