



from the designer's desk

robert trent jones II

# good drainage is the key

Are El Niño, the Greenhouse Effect, Global Warming and Arctic Meltdown causes of the huge rainouts of the American PGA Tour events, week after week, in 2005? A tour event is a huge affair, played on a great green outdoor stage – the golf course. When it rains and rains, with wet and difficult ground to slog around on and with a figurative “dark cloud” hanging above the players’ and spectators’ heads, even when the sky breaks clear and the sun comes out, the game must go on... But on a vastly altered playing surface.

That’s why the earlier courses were laid out on sandy links so they dried quickly and presented firm playing surfaces. Today, we veneer entire golf courses with sand and install field drainage pipe throughout, over the clay or soil base where necessary. These “all weather courses” are dry underfoot even when seasonal rains flood them. We first invented this concept at Sta. Elena Golf Club and the revised Luisita Golf Club, both in the Philippines where golf courses are subject to heavy tropical seasonal rains and at Eagle Point Golf Course in Medford, Oregon. We used SubAir under all the greens in Chenal Golf Club in Little Rock, Arkansas which helped cool the greens in the summer by sucking the heated moisture out. This method could also be reversed to warm the greens and melt morning frosts in the winter and early spring.

When, in recent years, the Augusta National course in Georgia suffered during the Masters, the members of the Club added a “SubAir” vacuum system, formerly used only under greens, but now even to its crosswalks and other key fairway locations. This improvement was put to the test at this year’s Masters when play was cancelled Friday due to unplayable conditions caused by persistent thunderstorms. The course recovered and the spectators could walk comfortably in most places. The epic dual between Tiger Woods and Chris DiMarco, playing 27 holes on Saturday and 28 holes to conclude play on Sunday, proved its worth.

My dad taught me that the three most important principles of golf architecture were drainage, drainage, drainage... It has never been more true than now as this year’s Masters fully demonstrated. ■



## un bon drainage et tout va mieux

Jusqu'en avril, neuf tournois du PGA Tour sur quinze ont été cassés par la météo. Seulement, quand il pleut des cordes, le spectacle doit continuer dès que possible, le terrain étant alors modifié.

Les parcours d'antan étaient construits sur du sable et séchaient vite. Aujourd'hui, on draine massivement après avoir épandu du sable sur les parcours, ce qui a d'abord été testé aux Philippines (pluies tropicales) et en Oregon. A Chenal (Arkansas), le système SubAir sous les greens, les rafraîchit en été, en chasse l'humidité, ou les réchauffe et fait fondre les gelées matinales en hiver. Il est en place à Augusta et pas seulement sous les greens. Cette année, malgré d'importants volumes d'eau tombés, le parcours est vite redevenu jouable. Les bagarre de Woods et DiMarco en valait la peine.

Mon père m'a toujours dit que les trois premières règles en matière d'architecture de golf étaient le drainage, le drainage et le drainage... Cela n'a jamais été aussi vrai qu'au Masters 2005.