

There are few courses in the world that get the opportunity to host major golf championships. Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield, Michigan, is among the elite. With over 200,000 square feet of bunkers and greens, Oakland Hills has the bones to host the biggest championships. But in recent years, the South Course began to experience slow drainage on the native push-up greens, leading them toward a renovation. The club also wanted to reconstruct the course back to the original 1918 Donald Ross design that could challenge professional golfers but remain playable for members.

SELECTING THE RIGHT PRODUCTS

Oakland Hills' director of agronomy, Phil Cuffare, consulted superintendents at top courses around the country for help developing a greens mix with great physical properties that resulted in firm, fast greens. He was introduced to John Maeder, Profile Golf[™] business manager, who advised employing Profile[®] Porous Ceramic (PPC) Greens Grade[™], an inorganic soil amendment that allows for deeper rooting, increased drainage, nutrient retention and better water management.

"In the past you always had to rely on Mother Nature to produce firm, fast playing conditions and now with tech advances in agronomics, rebuilding the greens with PPC allowed us to take Mother Nature out of the equation," Cuffare said.

IMPROVING DRAINAGE

Oakland Hills began the renovation in October 2019. Contractors installed the greens mix with PPC over the next year. Since then, the mix has significantly increased drainage rates on greens that were previously 4 inches per hour.

"What we've created is consistent, firm, fast playing conditions instead of hoping for a dry stretch of weather. Anytime we would get anywhere from a half inch of rain or greater, the playing conditions became very soft and weren't championship quality," Cuffare said. "With the new greens mix, we got an inch of rain and we didn't lose any firmness. It was incredible to see how fast they maintained after an inch of rain."

A GREENS MIX FOR THE FUTURE

The course reopened to the public in July 2021 to favorable reviews and predictions that the South Course will be in discussions for upcoming major tournaments. While time will tell if Oakland Hills is named among the elite, Cuffare feels the renovated course is in excellent shape and ready to take on the challenge, in part because of the enhanced greens mix.

"What PPC has done for Oakland Hills and the rest of the great clubs in the country is unbelievable," Cuffare said. "It's created consistency and uniformity on a daily basis, our plant health is at a premium. We've created a greens mix that will withstand the test of time for the future."

Profile[®] Porous Ceramic Helps Bring Iconic Michigan Course to Championship Caliber

Project Summary

Oakland Hills Country Club
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

CHALLENGES:

- Reconstruct the South Course using Donald Ross' initial architecture
- Bring greens infrastructure up to today's championship standards to challenge pros but still be playable for members
- Renovate the greens with a new sand/Profile mix to improve drainage

RESULTS:

- The greens mix with Profile dramatically increased drainage while maintaining excellent moisture

DIRECTOR OF AGRONOMY:

Phil Cuffare

PARTNERS:

Hanse Golf Course Design, Architect
Bob Oppold, New Mix Lab
Osburn Industries, Sand Blender
Best Sand, Sand Supplier

PRODUCTS USED:

- Profile[®] Porous Ceramic (PPC)
Greens Grade[™]

