



The Greenskeeping Team pictured at the 14th tee at TPC Toronto Osprey Valley.

Behind the Ropes

MY EXPERIENCE AS ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT AT OSPREY VALLEY

Written by and photos provided by Aaron Hill, Assistant Superintendent, TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley.

Hosting a major golf event is never a small feat—but doing so at a public golf course like Osprey Valley, where accessibility and excellence go hand in hand, was a truly special experience. As assistant superintendent, having the opportunity to help stage a tournament of this caliber at a course open to all who want to play was both humbling and exhilarating.

In the lead-up to the event, we made the decision to allow only our “stay and play” guests access to the course. This exclusive window gave us crucial recovery time for divots and allowed us to implement more aggressive cultural practices—brushing, verticutting, double mowing—essential steps to ensure the playing surfaces met championship standards.

Our biggest challenge was time. We had less than 12 months to prepare and only about three to four weeks of actual growing season before the pros arrived. To say I was nervous is an understatement. But we focused on what we could control. Mother Nature did her part, and we did ours—doing everything possible to “wake up” the turf. One of the key strategies was rough fertility. We timed it so things would pop at just the right moment, and fortunately, they did.

Caledon spring conditions can lag up to two weeks behind the GTA, so just getting over that initial temperature hump felt like a huge win. From there, it was about execution. Although this event was the biggest one that we’ve hosted, it wasn’t our first rodeo. Over the years, we’ve held Mackenzie Tour and Fortinet Tour events—each one serving as a dress rehearsal for the big show. That experience went a long way in helping our team stay composed and dialed-in when the pressure was on.

In the lead-up to the 2025 RBC Canadian Open at Osprey Valley, a surprising amount of our time was consumed by non-turf-related demands—something you don’t often think about when preparing a golf course for a PGA TOUR event. Tent companies needed exact locations of underground irrigation for every structure being installed to avoid damaging water lines. Our team found itself pulled in countless directions - coordinating schedules, organizing food for the crew all week, distributing uniforms and swag, arranging extra equipment rentals, and ensuring every staff member had a headlamp for the early mornings spent working in total darkness. We even had to develop detailed maps for machine operators navigating the evolving tournament infrastructure. It was a true all-hands-on-deck effort, extending far beyond just turf management.

Personally, managing the chaos came down to one thing: over-planning. I spent a large part of the winter mentally walking through every possible scenario—playing out what-ifs, identifying pressure points, and building in contingencies. I knew that things would change, and they did. Having the ability to call audibles when necessary was crucial, but those pivots only worked because we had a solid framework to fall back on. The prep wasn’t just about turf—it was about making sure the entire operation could flex without breaking when the unexpected inevitably hit. That level of planning gave our team the confidence to stay focused, even when we were being pulled in a dozen directions at once.

Our volunteers were absolute game-changers. They came through when we needed them most—skilled, dedicated, and proud to represent Osprey Valley. We had 35 volunteers alongside our 70-person staff, and their contributions were vital to our success.



Of course, none of this would have been possible without the agronomy team. They're the unsung heroes—the ones still grinding when the lights go out and the last toast has been made. Their work ethic, dedication, and attention to detail are what make days like this possible. I couldn't be prouder of what we accomplished together.

PJ Ringenberger, PGA tour agronomist, shared: "What stands out in my mind was Sunday morning at 4 am, I turned to Dave and Aaron and said 'do you hear that?' The lunchroom was full of chatter and excitement. After 7 days of grinding, we still had the same energy in the room as day 1.

And let's not forget during the event, we weren't just maintaining one course—we were managing three. After completing morning prep on the North Course—usually wrapped by 5:30 AM—we'd pivot to the Hoot and the Heathlands, ensuring conditions were top-tier across the entire property.

"I have never been more proud and grateful of a team that represented our facility with such passion and excitement every day leading up to and during us hosting the 2025 RBC Canadian Open. It was an eye-opening experience to see just how well everything came together daily and how well the team performed under the spotlight and stresses of hosting a national event. The agronomy team members comprised of Osprey Valley staff and experienced industry volunteers came together and produced some outstanding playing conditions in some challenging weather throughout the entire week. Watching this group bond and become a large team / family over the week was the highlight of the tournament."

– Dave Hunter, Superintendent, Osprey Valley



But the work didn't end when the tournament did. There were no days off after The Canadian Open. We've been sold out every day since, with 200 golfers a day playing the North Course alone. That kind of traffic demands full focus and relentless consistency. Even after The Canadian Open hangover sets in, our team has stayed locked in.

What truly sustains that level of performance is our team and staff culture. Every single team member is fully bought in—not just to agronomy—but to the experience. We know that delivering a memorable round for every guest, every day, is what defines our success. And that shared mindset is what makes Osprey Valley such a special place. ■