

Case Study

Kennington Golf
Club
Canfield, OH

A public course and
residential community

Opened in 2006

Designed by Brian
Huntley

Sean Novotny
Superintendent

"Having all that
information in one place
empowers the
superintendent to do
their jobs more
efficiently."



From The Ground Up

Software eases superintendent's job during new construction

Kennington Golf Course in Canfield, Ohio is a premier golfing community that is in a rapid pace of construction despite a slow economy. The houses that surround the golf course are a mixture of finished and unfinished homes. At the moment, when you visit Superintendent Sean Novotny, you park in the mud surrounding his newly constructed maintenance building.

Novotny, seated in front of a laptop on a picnic table inside the shop, is working his way through a CourseVision software map. He's making adjustments on the fly because the course changes on a daily basis as the construction continues. He says the software has been extraordinarily useful.

"I've discovered that it's a great tool for new construction," Novotny says. "People, including our owner, are more likely to spend money if they can visualize the changes you are asking them to make."

The Problem

Novotny receives a call on his cell phone from one of the construction engineers building the homes around the course. The discussion centers on a load of concrete the engineer has. He wants to know if Novotny could use any leftovers.

"Sure, we'll find a use for it," Novotny says. "Let me make a couple of calls to check on some things, and I'll let you know where I want you to bring it."

He hangs up, and then turns with a wide grin.

"That's part of what you have to deal with when you're in new construction mode," Novotny says. "You have to be ready to change quickly and make adjustments to your plans."

The problem it presents, however, is that it makes keeping track of the exact measurements of the course much more difficult because of the constant revisions to the original housing plan. With expansive input from a hands-on owner, Novotny needed one central repository for all the information about the course and surrounding properties.

"CourseVision gives me the ability and flexibility to make sudden changes as they present themselves," Novotny says. "As houses around the golf course are being built sometimes we need to add drainage and sprinklers to better blend into our new neighbors."

"In the old days, we would have had to send out two or three crew members with a wheel and some string to get measurements on the course and of the greens," he adds. "Even with experienced crew members, they wouldn't be exact, and it would have taken two months."

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Kennington is a 400 acre development with 201 acres of golf grounds. Here are some highlights of the golf property:

121.58 acres of turf
2.02 acres of sand
28.23 acres of fairway
7.55 acres of lakes
6.09 acres of cart paths
22.14 acres of native
2.95 acres of greens

So when Novotny heard about the potential flexibility of CourseVision and its single file for all property data, he was intrigued.

The Solution

When superintendents contract with CourseVision to provide a complete map of their golf course, it starts with an aerial photo of the property acquired by CourseVision from its established relationships with government and private aerial sources. Then the fun begins.

The team at CourseVision combines the photo of the course with GPS coordinates to create a two-dimensional map of the entire property with exact measurements, square footage, and the latitude and longitude of all the course's features. Then the team adds layers on top of the photo such as turf, bunkers, walkways, water features, buildings, wetlands and gardens. Superintendents can turn on and off any of those layers as necessary to get at the information they need, which provides them powerful tools to communicate with owners, crew and their management team about on course activities and changes.

If the owner hired a professional survey team to produce the same map, it would easily have added tens of thousands to the construction costs, Novotny says. With the CourseVision system, it cost them a one-time \$1,500. What Novotny appreciates most, however, is the flexibility the program offers.

"That's come in handy as we're putting the irrigation system on the map," Novotny says.

"There's the original drawing of the system but they could never give us an exact location. With CourseVision, it shows us an exact latitude and longitude. With cell phones these days, you can walk with the phone using the latitude and longitude to find an overgrown sprinkler head in seconds."

Novotny says his owner is hands-on and wants to see detailed renditions of any changes made to the course. But the owner travels around the country to take care of his construction business. Waiting until he was in Canfield to visit the course would hold up construction forever. With CourseVision, Novotny can send the owner an email with the PDF of the course and the proposed changes — and can receive a nearly instantaneous response.

"It has made the construction go much more smoothly if the owner doesn't have to be on-site to approve changes — the map shows it all to him," Novotny says. "The software provides you so much detail that he can actually see the changes and approve them wherever he is."

Novotny also found the map helpful when it came to surviving a brutal summer in the Midwest. He had to raise some mowing heights when better weather returned. Novotny used the coordinates from CourseVision to get the mowing lines back to the original shape. It took the guesswork and

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Carved from densely-wooded acreage, Kennsington Golf Course is an 18-hole, 7,044-yard, par 71 layout that is bounded on the east by Kyle Woods Nature Preserve and on the south by Boy Scouts of America Camp Stambaugh.



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human error out of the equation, and golfers could play the greens without worrying about new configurations.

“The greens would have had to change if we hadn’t had the information the program could provide for us,” Novotny says. “With it, we restored the greens to their exact specifications.”

Another advantage to having a CourseVision map is that it helps inform the emergency services with specific course information in case something happens on the course. “The fire department already has a copy of our map, and we’ll be sharing it with other emergency services in the future,” Novotny says.

The Future

With the program’s ability to calculate square footages exactly, Novotny expects to calculate accurately how much fertilizer and chemicals he needs to purchase to keep his golf course looking good. In a tight economy where budgets are being cut, this will be an immense boon to the maintenance department.

“Eventually, I’m going to use the calculations and sync them with the GPS units on our sprayers,” Novotny says. “It will make our applications nearly perfect and will save our course lots of money over the long haul on chemical costs.”

That’s important because, in addition to putting out a great golf course for the public, Kennsington Golf Club is hoping to be certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. Part of the certification process includes precise measurements of the course and accurate records of what and how much chemicals a course uses. The CourseVision program can automatically fill out that part of the application for superintendents.

“Once you have the Audubon International requirements on the map, it’s a simple thing to add other Audubon-sanctioned improvements such as birdhouses,” Novotny says. “Having all that information in one place empowers the superintendent to do their jobs more efficiently.”

Lastly, Novotny says he’s excited about using the program to map his integrated pest management (IPM) efforts, which will lower his chemical costs even further. He’s in the process of mapping his grub infestations and will use the program later to put a layer on the map of diseases as well.

“It will help us figure out where our problem areas are and treat them accordingly in the future,” Novotny says. “It will allow us to be more environmentally sensitive — something our neighbors will appreciate.”