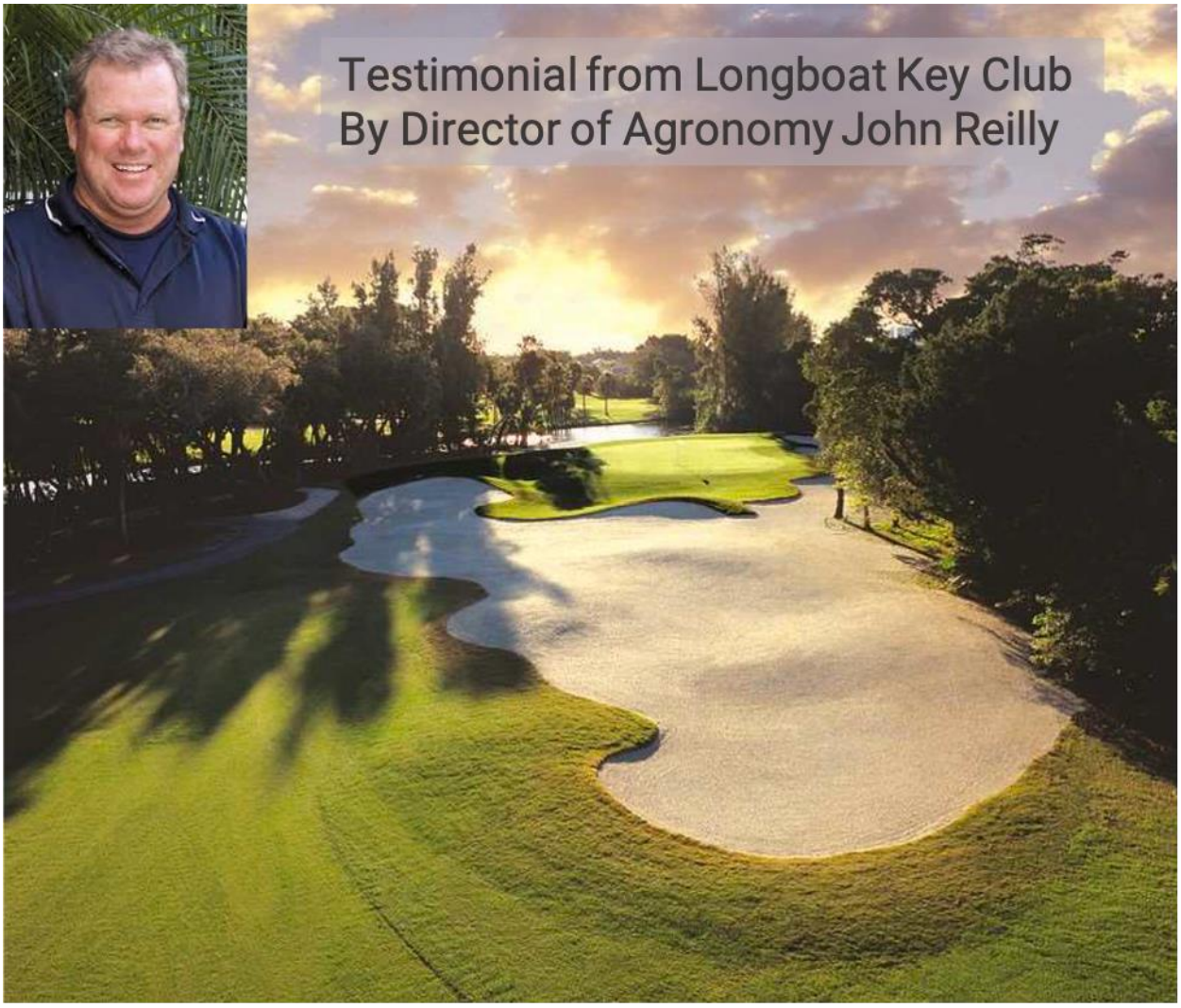


I am comfortable in paradox: the more I surmise, the less I know - certainly a benefit of age. Fifteen years ago, I was made the captain of sinking ship. A decade and a half later, we are the most profitable private/resort golf facility on the planet. Despite our ROI boondoggle, I was able to strike a cooperative funding grant with our great state to pitch in 500K to increase our sprinkler heads by 18% and reduce well water use by 38%. So I would think decades in the biz and an exhaustive exercise of gallon counting for the state of Florida would make me a ninja regarding water management; hell, I certainly thought so.

Enter turfRad this summer – and get this – the self-appointed steward of all things golf was overwatering. In this age of hashtags, #wrongagainreilly is an ethos that is always close at hand when it comes to this primate. I first saw turfRad at the conference and show this time last year in Orlando, walking the convention floor with super Juan and super Fredi. Quite clearly the device was superior for large scale instant info concerning moisture and ingenious for its

ability to add a meaningful task to daily mowing. I summarily dismissed it for Longboat Key. I saw it as a good fit for tree-hugger zones or courses paying for water.

The next time I saw turfRad in a completely different context at Muirfield Village during the Memorial tournament. I saw it on this giant screen in the war room and it was being used in real time to assess and predict turfgrass performance. My head exploded. LBK needed this technology post-haste. We are a 45-hole facility with wall-to-wall Platinum Paspalum; it is a grass that gets a bad rap for not being an elite playing surface. We solved that problem on the greens years back by creating uniform moisture to increase uniform firmness, resulting in high levels of surface performance and health. Measuring large areas like tees, fairways and rough with moisture meters or singular soil sensors proved very challenging with golf and constant maintenance happening. Enter turfRad.

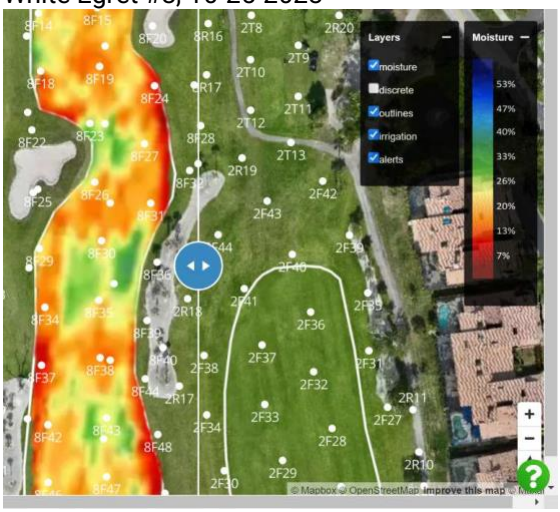
At the end of the day, the golf business for me is still about relationships more than anything. We at the Longboat Key Club are fearless early – not so much adopters, more like adapters to data driven technology – but it is a person or persons who brings that technology to us. I first met Andrew Buonincontro at Muirfield Village; he worked tirelessly to get us hooked up on the platform, and trust me I was a squeaky wheel. Another thing that gives turfRad the nod from me is the platform itself. If you are a turf techie, you swim in a sea of incompatible proprietary software and yet another mobile app and shortcut on your devices. turfRad is delivered by taskTracker, a platform the CRU and I already used.

As I mentioned above, I felt my watering plan and philosophy was pretty dialed. Initially I was expecting turfRad to prove what a great manager of water I am. Unfortunately for this monkey, we had much work to do (see videos on my X/Twitter channel). We possessed both overly wet and dry areas. For me the rubber meets the road with on-course technology if it provides quickly actionable data. turfRad did that for Longboat Key Club in spades. It quickly made a positive impact on performance and health and allowed us to get after irrigation system tweaking daily (refer to turfRad screenshots below).

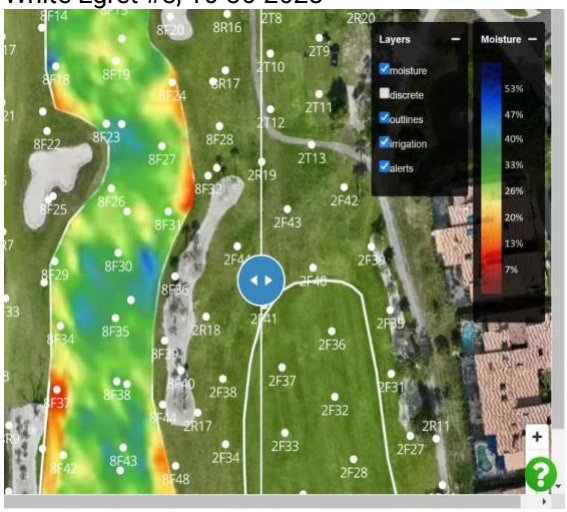
It is said that timing is everything and this was perfect for Longboat, as we onboarded with the good folks from turfRad: We had a severe summertime drought with high heat and winds. We had massive pump issues on our 27-hole course and now our golf season has been plagued with relentless cold, damp and sunless El Nino weather. I almost feel guilty telling my peers how good a season we are having and how many less inputs we are using on our Platinum Paspalum during these trying environmental patterns.

As a manager, I like to paint a clear picture and check the boxes; so, let's review. Longboat Key Club is a barrier island that gets 50% less yearly the average rainfall than the rest of Florida. The irrigation water is 16,000 ppm TDS and Paspalum is the only grass that can handle those harsh conditions. Historically it is a disease-prone grass that requires many inputs and can be very high maintenance. If you know anything about us, our mantra is Plant Health = Plant Performance. It took me several years to land on that program for our greens and about half a year for the rest of the course using the massive, highly actionable data collected daily. Happy golfers, happy life.

White Egret #8, 10-25-2023



White Egret #8, 10-30-2023



Red Hawk #9, 11-24-2023

Red Hawk #9, 11-27-2023