

“There is Never a Normal Year,” — Prophetic Words by Rodney Bryant, Superintendent at Ballantrae Golf Course

by Melanie Bonds



Rodney Bryant and family, wife, Allison, son, Caleb and twins, Avery Claire and Emma Grace

Early in 2020 Rodney and his wife, Allison, incorporated a good deal of change in the family with the birth of their twin girls. The proud parents had little time to adjust to their daughters, before a lot more change hit them—compliments of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the upheaval, Rodney remains philosophic. “There is never a normal year, so the challenge is different every year, whether it’s a pandemic and doubling up on course traffic, or an extremely wet winter or drought. It’s important to be able to change and adjust to the environment.”

Rodney grew up in Ripley, Mississippi and at sixteen started working on a golf course. “It was just a little 9 hole Track and I have been pretty much hooked since then.” Working outdoors appealed to Rodney, as did the constant change in goals and tasks. When he graduated from Ripley High School in 2000, he applied to Mississippi State University where he graduated with a degree in agronomy in 2005.

Upon graduation Rodney came to Birmingham, Alabama to work with Bruce Hospes, CGCS and John Tidwell (both Mississippi State grads) at Old Overton course. Bruce and John and Mark Langner were decided influences in Rodney’s career.

Rodney left Old Overton to go to Mossy Oak in Mississippi where he was on the scene for construction and grow-in of that course. Mossy Oak remains Rodney’s favorite course to play. “I love that style of course. The layout and design with mostly short and native grasses on the outside is just not the normal construction in the South. Everyone around here wants Augusta National and Mossy Oak is just the opposite, all natural with tons of native grasses and was built mainly for walking. You can stand on hole seven back tee and see all 18 flags, which I think is really cool. I remember asking Gil Hanse, as we were standing on what is now the 5th tee, what his vision was. He said “I want to see a sea of bunkers.” He accomplished that.”

After finishing construction and grow-in at Mossy Oak, Rodney and Allison were ready to return to the Birmingham to be closer to family. Ballantrae opened up and thanks to John Tidwell, Rodney applied and was hired for the job.

Happy to be back in Birmingham, Rodney has enjoyed his tenure at Ballantrae and hopes to be there a while. Ballantrae is a semi-private club that is owned by the City of Pelham. Designed by Bob Cupp, the course generates 35,000 rounds or better each year.

Like many superintendents, one of Rodney’s greatest challenges is managing people. “You have to manage every single one differently. You have to figure out their personality, how they handle certain tasks and how they handle pressure. No one handles things the same way.”

Rodney learned a lot from his time at Mossy Oak, but nothing more important than dealing with the delicate balance of making time for work and family. “It is easy to get caught up in work and loose track of time when finish something up. I learned a lot about making time for family during construction and grow in at Mossy Oak, and have made sure to apply those lessons now that I am at Ballantrae.”

Since the birth of their twins, this is more important than ever. His wife, Allison, is Human Resources Assistant at The ARC of Shelby County. They have a seven year old son, Caleb, nicknamed CJ. The girls, Avery Claire and Emma Grace are five months.

For relaxation, Rodney loves all sports, mainly golf, hunting and fishing. He played golf during high school and Junior College Golf as well. He thinks nothing can be better than a game of golf with his son, CJ, now that he is old enough to play.

Rodney, thanks for your service on the AGCSA Board!