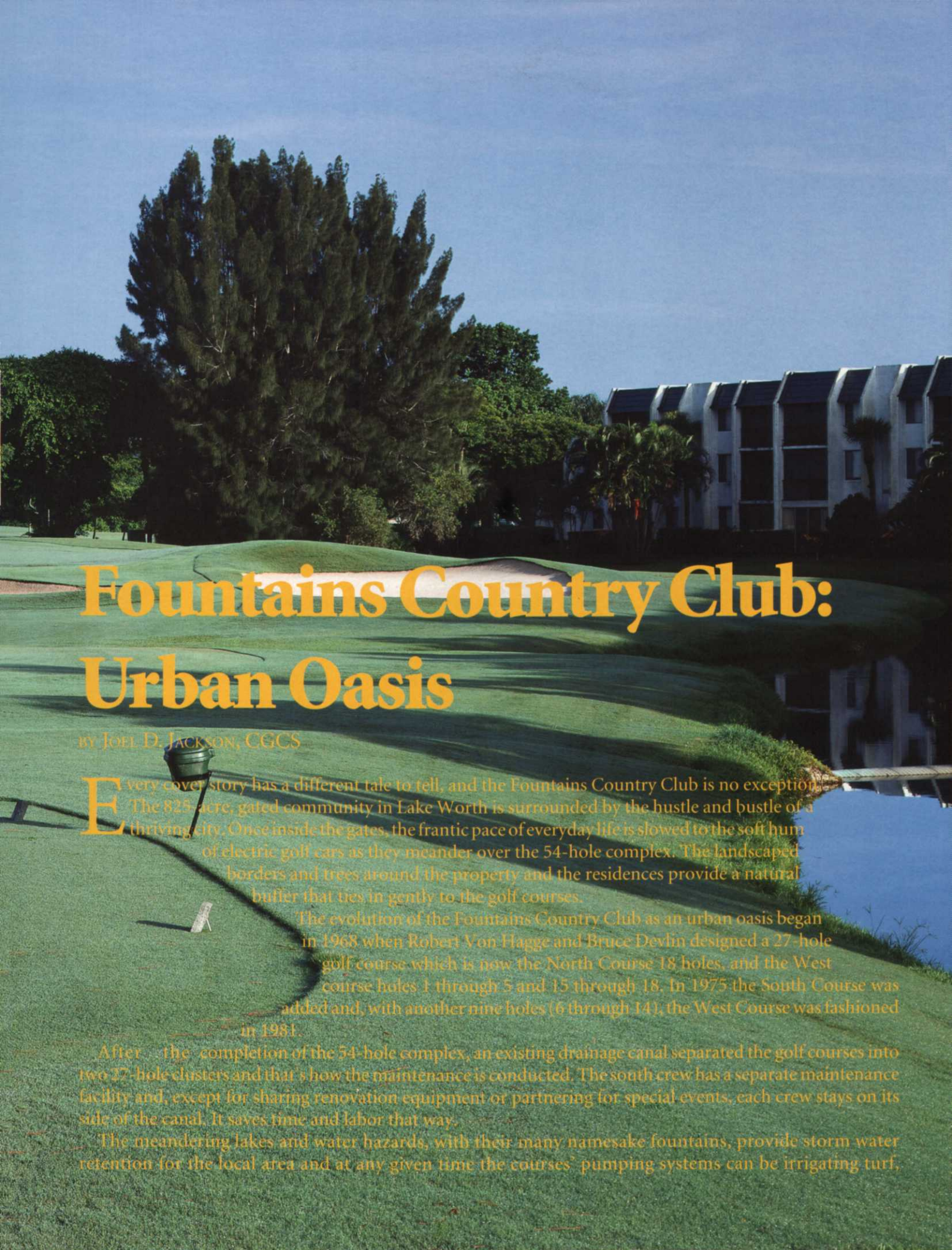




Par 3, 200 yard,
#8 North,
Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



Fountains Country Club: Urban Oasis

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

Every cover story has a different tale to tell, and the Fountains Country Club is no exception. The 825-acre, gated community in Lake Worth is surrounded by the hustle and bustle of a thriving city. Once inside the gates, the frantic pace of everyday life is slowed to the soft hum of electric golf cars as they meander over the 54-hole complex. The landscaped borders and trees around the property and the residences provide a natural buffer that ties in gently to the golf courses.

The evolution of the Fountains Country Club as an urban oasis began in 1968 when Robert Von Hagge and Bruce Devlin designed a 27-hole golf course which is now the North Course 18 holes, and the West course holes 1 through 5 and 15 through 18. In 1975 the South Course was added and, with another nine holes (6 through 14), the West Course was fashioned in 1981.

After the completion of the 54-hole complex, an existing drainage canal separated the golf courses into two 27-hole clusters and that's how the maintenance is conducted. The south crew has a separate maintenance facility and, except for sharing renovation equipment or partnering for special events, each crew stays on its side of the canal. It saves time and labor that way.

The meandering lakes and water hazards, with their many namesake fountains, provide storm water retention for the local area and at any given time the courses' pumping systems can be irrigating turf,



#6 West, a 329-yard, par 4 is part of nine holes added in 1981 to complete the 54-hole complex. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

One benefit of some of the 30-year-old waterways is a population of very mature largemouth bass which provides good sport for residents and some off-duty staff members

discharging storm water or recharging lakes.

One benefit of some of the 30-year-old waterways is a population of very mature largemouth bass



The par 5, 535 yard #3 hole on the North Course is part of a string of challenging beginning holes. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



#4 North, a 440 yard par 4, built in 1968 is a good example of greens bunkering and run up approach areas in the Von Hagge/Devlin design. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.



This picture of the green on the par-4, 390-yard #7 North shows how a golf course offers peaceful natural surroundings even though located in an urban residential area. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

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A big banyan tree and big bunkers guard the par 5, 467 yard, #11 North hole. Photo by Daniel Zelazek.

which provides good sport for residents and some off-duty staff members, reports Mike Perham, CGCS, director of golf course maintenance.

“Managing the waterways is definitely a balancing act,” said Perham. “We have to time our irrigation cycles and aquatic weed control versus rainfall events and storm water discharge. You have to pay attention to the needs of the turf and the algae and weed populations. Unfortunately we can’t control the quality of the water we bring in from the county’s drainage canal to recharge our lakes. It can be infested with weeds at times, which means we have to deal with them eventually.”

Mike has been real busy since his arrival at the Fountains in May, 1995.

“We have had a major renovation project each year since I’ve come on board. With 27 holes that are 30 years old, we have had to update and upgrade some of the infrastructure and

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playing surfaces. Two of the most important improvements have been to the irrigation systems on both 27-hole complexes. We did the North complex last year and this year, we are doing the South complex.

“Although it has made for some nonstop summers around here, I’m glad the members have been willing to

support the improvements. It just means we are being given the tools and resources necessary to provide more consistent playing conditions.” (See *Major Renovations on page 38*).

Directing the operations for a 54-hole complex is quite a change for Perham. He made the decision to come to the Fountains after spending 11 years

It meant leaving the confines of a 75-acre golf course with a staff of 12 and taking on 325 acres of golf course with 54 employees.

at The Moorings Club, an 18-hole golf course in Vero Beach. Perham said, “Professionally for me, it was the most dramatic change I had ever contemplated. It meant leaving the confines of a 75-acre golf course with a staff of 12 and taking on 325 acres of golf course with 54 employees.”

“I now have two superintendents with their respective crews, an equipment manager, a landscape crew, and an administrative assistant that I depend on for the day-to-day operation of the facilities. I talk to each superintendent in the morning for updates



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Mike once offered this advice to superintendents who may be contemplating taking on a multi-course operation which requires more administration and less hands on.

1. “Feel comfortable with the immediate professionals you will be working with on a daily basis. I never would have accepted this position if I had not felt good about my relationship with the general manager and director of golf.”
2. “Hire good people and hold them accountable. This advice is never more important than in a large operation like this. If someone is not doing their job, and you have to do it, you do not need that individual. That may seem harsh, but you must realize this is the only way you will accomplish the job for which you were hired in the first place.
3. “Have fun! It is imperative to maintain a positive mental attitude about your job. Truly enjoy what you do, and take pride in your accomplishments.



and questions between 6:30 and 9:00. By 7:15 I am riding the courses checking on the progress of projects and checking holes for general turf conditions. This is the most peaceful time of day and usually the only time I get to see the courses consistently.”

Perham makes it habit to have lunch with the director of golf or the club manager three or four times a week to keep communication flowing. Lunches also provide the opportunity to meet with other club officials and his green committee chairman to discuss ongoing or upcoming projects. In the afternoon Perham tries to get out on the course again for a quick tour to catch other areas missed in the morning.

“The North Course takes the brunt of play,” Perham said. “It is situated next to the main clubhouse and the

Major Renovations/ Projects

1998 — South Course: Installation of new Rain Bird Cirrus irrigation system. 1400 heads. 2500 gpm Flowtronex/PSI pump station. Contractor: Fleming Brothers; Greens, tee and bunker renovations South 27 holes. Contractor: Quality Grassing; Installation of pesticide mix-and-load bay and equipment wash rack at South Course maintenance complex. Contractor: Eco Soil Systems;

1997 — North 27 holes irrigation upgrade. Rain Bird Maxi 5 Control system. Dual head system around greens. Replaced swing joints and re-tubed all heads. Contractor: Fountains GC staff;

1996 — Rebuilt North GC greens to USGA specs. Improved driving range tees and mounding. Contractor: Haverland Blackrock.

1995 — Reconstruction of holes #2, 3, 4 on South Course. Excavation of four lakes, fairway drainage, mounding, tees and cart path construction. Irrigation installation on three holes. Contractor: Haverland Blackrock & Fountains GC staff.

Michael Perham, CGCS

Originally from: Charleston, South Carolina. Raised in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Family: Wife, Marcy (Married 20 years in November). Children: Laura (15), Christopher (12).

Education: Lake City Community College, 1978. Cardinal Newman High School, West Palm Beach.

Employment history: 1995 to present, Fountains Country Club, Lake Worth; 1984 - 1995, golf course superintendent, The Moorings Club, Vero Beach; 1980 - 1984, golf course superintendent, Boca Del Mar C.C., Boca Raton; 1978-1980, assistant superintendent, Turnberry Isle C.C., Aventura; 1977, OJT, Bay Hill Club, Orlando; 1975-76, crew member, Indian Springs C.C., Delray Beach; 1974, crew member, Boca West Club, Boca Raton.



Professional affiliations: Member of: Florida GCSA (Treasure Coast Chapter board 1985-91, president 1986-87); (Palm Beach Chapter board 1983-84); Florida Turfgrass Association (FTGA board 1983); and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Served on various GCSAA committees.

People who have influenced your life and career: I think the most important thing that I was taught was to have a good work ethic. Do a day’s work for a day’s pay. This was ingrained into me early in life by my father. During the early formative years of my career, I was fortunate to work for two true professionals: Jim Ellison at the Bay Hill Club and Dan Jones at Turnberry Isle. The ability to work for these two individuals and observe the manner in which they conducted themselves influenced me greatly.

How did you get into the business: I started playing golf in elementary school. Family had a membership at original PGA Club, now BallenIsles. Played quite often with and Dad and my brothers. The summer between my junior and senior year in high school, My brother John was doing an OJT at Boca West. He got me the job. I hated it! After high school, John had graduated from Lake City Community College and was working at Indian Springs. I decided to try golf maintenance again for one more summer. I enjoyed it more and went to see Dr. Nutter at LCCC in the summer of 1975. Entered the Golf Operations program in 1976 and been doing this line of work ever since.

Memorable moments: The many friendships developed over the years. Being involved with various associations enables you to meet people from different parts of the state and country. I enjoy going to meetings and playing other courses primarily for the learning experiences, but also for the chance to renew old friendships.

Hobbies and interests: Aviation, golf and cycling.



Fountains C.C.

Location: Lake Worth.

Ownership: Membership

Playing policy: Private.

54 holes: North Course - Par 71 at 6840 yards. Course Rating: 73.7 Slope Ratings: 130. West Course - Par 71 at 6793 yards. Course Rating: 73.2 Slope Ratings: 132. South Course - Par 72 at 6783 yards. Course Rating: 72.6 Slope Rating: 133.

Designed by: Robert Von Hagge and Bruce Devlin. Greens, tees and bunker work by Jeff Myers of JCM Group.

Opened: North 27 holes 1968 and 1969. South 27 holes: 18 holes built in 1975. Nine holes added and original South 18 reconfigured in 1981.

Management: William O'Connor - general manager; Mike Nedrow - director of golf; Donald Honig - club president; Ed Freedman - green committee chairman; Mike Perham, CGCS - director of golf course maintenance; golf course superintendents: North 27 holes - Pasi Pussinen; South 27 holes - Aki Polvikoski; administrative assistant - Mary Lips.

Acreage under maintenance: 325 acres of turf.

Greens: 9 Acres. Average size: 6,500 sq. ft. Turf type: Tifdwarf. HOC = .140 - .175. Overseeding: 2/3 Poa trivialis, 1/3 bentgrass = 10-12#/M. Green Speed Goals: Membership happiness.

Tees: 4 acres. Turf type: Tifway 419. HOC = .450. Overseeding: Perennial ryegrass = 15#/M.

Fairways: 140 acres. Turf Type: North 27 holes = Heinz 57 variety. South 27 = Tifway 419. HOC = .575 - .675. Overseeding: North Course = Perennial ryegrass @ 350# per Acre.

Roughs: 172 acres. Turf Type: Tifway 419 and Heinz 57 Variety. HOC = 1-3/8" to 1-3/4". Overseeding: None.

Waterways/Lakes/Ponds: 50 Acres. Recharge water for the lakes is drawn from a large Lake Worth Drainage District canal. This canal is infested with numerous aquatic weed varieties, causing constant weed control problems in the golf course lakes. In addition, the golf course lakes serve as storm water retention and discharge for the property.

Irrigation: North 27 holes has three separate pumping stations with 1950 gpm capacity. 978 heads (Toro and Rain Bird), 47 Rain Bird MSC plus controllers. South 27 holes (See major renovation projects section on page 20.)

Staff: Total including superintendents 54. 2 assistants. 5 mechanics. 4 pest control techs. 2 irrigation techs. 4 clubhouse landscape maintenance. 2 tree crew.

Special or unusual conditions: Biggest challenge is the lack of a monostand of turf on the North 27 holes due to the age of these holes. The different varieties respond differently to conditions and maintenance practices and create a challenge to manage.

Maintenance equipment: Greens: 16 Toro Greensmaster 1000 walk mowers. Tees: 6 Ransomes Triplex mowers. Fairways: 4 Ransomes 300 5-gang mowers. Roughs: 4 Toro Reelmaster 7-gang ground drive units. Slopes: 4 John Deere 2653 mowers. Rotary/Trim mowers: 4 Ransomes 728s.

Cultural programs: Greens - Light verticut every two weeks. Hollow tine aerify 2x per year. Deep drill 2x per year. Hydroject 8-9x per year. Tees - aerify 3x per year. Verticut and topdress 3x per year. Fairways - Verticut once per year. Core aerify 3-4x per year. Roughs - aerify 3-4x per year.

Wildlife inventory: The lakes have very mature largemouth bass. Herons and other wading and water birds. Flocks of wild parrots can be noisy at times.

first several holes tend to play left to right which is how 80 percent of golfers play, so you could call it user-friendly. The other two courses hold their own, however, and offer the members a good variety of holes and challenges.”

During the busy fall and winter season, Perham has all 54 holes open and ready for play Tuesdays through Sundays. On Mondays — even in season — he is allowed to take 18 holes out of service in rotation for special maintenance programs to keep the courses in shape. In the summer he has to keep only 18 holes open. The majority of the summer golfers only play nine holes before it gets hot. Of course the past couple of summers, at least 18 holes have undergone major renovation.

The members at the Fountains had concerns about rough conditions this past winter just like golfers all over the state. Perham praised his green chair-

“One good thing is that a lot of the members play in a golf league that plays at different courses. They can see and compare conditions at different times. I think they have learned that no course is perfect all the time. Sometimes we look better than others and other times we don’t. It is definitely a learning process for everyone.”

man for stepping up and supporting him and the staff during the tough times.

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Perham was happy to note that the Fountains graded out very well according to members’ observations.

“Each superintendent and green committee needs to discuss and agree on what conditions the members want and expect. Call it a plan. Call it goals. Whatever. Write it down. Now everybody should be on the same page.

“Our members want a good, smooth, consistent surface for normal everyday play. We are not locked into



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Control panels for the new Flowtronex VFD installed on the South Course are located next to an existing rest room building (above). The new pumps are housed in an underground vault in the background.

Left, Mike shows off the new underground pump installation. Residents requested a change in the old pump house location due to noise. The new location will be bermed and landscaped and very quiet.

Fountains Snapshots By Joel Jackson



Irrigation contractor at work installing a new system on the South Course. Mike has his plate full with three or four projects underway this summer!



Mike checks out grow-in progress on the South Course greens. The Tifdwarf sprigs are just a few weeks old. The bunker crew is cleaning up and edging the bunkers behind the drain installation team in preparation for adding new sand.

a specific number on the Stimpmeter. In fact, we don't own one. I like to keep the greens at a consistency so that I am a couple of days of double cutting or vertigrooming and rolling from tournament conditions. We don't want to have to make drastic height-of-cut changes to achieve faster speeds. Again it comes back to understanding and agreeing on what conditions are expected."

Oddly enough, Mike has fielded a few complaints about the greens being too fast on occasion.

"During the fall when the bermuda-grass growth slows down and the overseeding isn't mature, the surfaces can be a little faster than normal. Then we get into the seed establishment period the greens slow down as we manage the seedlings into a mature stand of grass. We just have to make sure we are doing a good job of keeping the members

"We just have to make sure we are doing a good job of keeping the members informed of what's going on."

informed of what's going on."

Keeping people informed is also a goal of Perham's as he assumes the presidency of the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association. Beginning in 1983, Mike has been involved in professional association business, having served on local chapter boards and becoming president of the Treasure Coast Chapter in 1986-87. He has served on FGCSA, FTGA and GCSAA committees involved with publications, chapter relations, research and education.

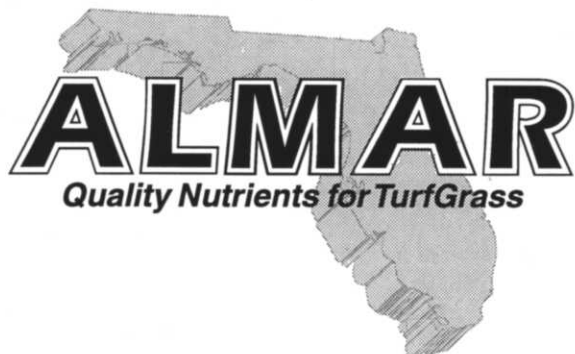
Like many of his predecessors, Mike

would like to see more participation from the rank-and-file members.

"I go to meetings and play golf courses for the educational value and experience. The volunteer service to the associations has helped me become a better manager and superintendent. I also value the friendships I have made through the local, state and even national association activities."

Looking back over the changes in his daily job responsibilities and the progress being made renovating the golf courses Mike said, "The transition from a hands-on golf course superintendent to more of an administrator was very difficult. Now, three years have passed and I look forward to going to work every day."

Editors Note: As we went to press, Mike was recuperating at home from radical surgery. He expects to be back to work soon.



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