Steel tackles management along with turf

By Vern Putney

David Steel, golf course super superintendent at Eastover Country Club in New Orleans, at age 40 is deeply involved in the far broader picture of golf — ownership, management and operations.

His newest title is general manager. He's a vice president in a trio who, in 1990, formed Steel VP/GM and superintendent.

Eastover was under construction when Steel went there in 1987 as superintendent. The private 18-hole, par-72, 6,800-yard course opened for play in the summer of 1988.

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“Some members are here because they want to play,” Steel said.

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“I think my main attribute is the ability to see that things get done properly, to train crews to do the job of meeting high standards I've set,” he added.

This, he believes, contributed greatly to swift realization of the membership goal.

“When most clubs encounter an economic depression, the tendency is to start cutting costs,” Steel said. “We maintained our forward outlook and increased budgets.”

Steel and associates are not resting on their laurels. They are seeking out other club properties with a collective eye toward renovation and rejuvenation.

“Our objective at Eastover from Day One has been to construct a quality course, conduct a friendly and efficient country club, and make a profit,” Steel emphasized. “We intend to expand this area of interest, retaining Eastover as a flagship.”

Steel and colleagues appear to have been highly successful with their aims and the loyalty of 13 full-time employees.

They are perhaps proudest of their leadership role in helping charities. More than $200,000 was raised for charity in 1991, and already booked for 1992 are such money-raisers as the American Cancer Society, Easter Seals, Hospice, Catholic Charities, Children's Hospital, Cystic Fibrosis and Alumni Association.

Steel was introduced to golf at age 11 as part of a family membership at Brookwood Country Club in Jackson, Miss.

At 15, he began getting paid for help around the pro shop and the course. At 5 a.m. Sundays, he mowed greens, then hustled to the pro shop to help dispense sodas, sell golf balls, clean clubs and other duties. He was a full-timer on weekends, moving to maintenance work in the summertime.

Steel graduated form Mississippi State Turfgrass Management School in 1973, and in January 1974 became assistant pro at Live Oaks Golf Club in Jackson.

The next summer he moved to a job as superintendent at Pine Hill Golf Club, a course under construction in Monroe, La.

After nearly five years in the demanding dual role of superintendent and golf pro at Pine Hill, he switched to turf equipment sales. But in 1984 he returned to superintendent duties at Lakewood Country Club here.

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