**GCSAA battles being waged behind doors**

By Peter Blais

The departure of top executives and officials of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has shed light on a behind-the-scenes battle being waged over the association's future.

The initial public skirmish was fought at last winter's annual meeting when members resoundingly defeated several proposed bylaw amendments and voted out two incumbent board members.

Opponents claimed the bylaw changes would have given the board too much power and diverted attention away from the superintendents by encouraging more non-superintendents to join.

That vote apparently established a battlefield pitting an old guard versus new guard. The old consisted of past expansion-minded presidents, their boards and Chief Executive Officer John Schilling. The new guard is headed by current President Randy Nichols, leader of what many view as the more inward-looking current board.

That conflict was partly responsible for the Arthur Anderson management study that played a role in the resignations of Schilling, senior directors Robert Ochs and Diana Green, and Immediate Past President Bill Rohrman.

"The new board feels it is operating from a mandate that it received at the annual meeting. I attended that meeting and board had no such mandate," said GCSAA Past (1990) President Gerald Faubel.

"To pull back when the needs of our members are being met just doesn't make sense. I believe our members are being served better than ever before."

Richard Fahey, president of GCSAA's Maine chapter, sees it somewhat differently.

"There does seem to be a change in the wind," he said. "Exactly why, I don't know. But there is a real difference of opinion out there about GCSAA's future."

"Branching off to attract members, like club managers, bothers a lot of people."

Continued on page 20

---

**Ornamentals: A rise of the future in golf**

By Mark Leslie

For golf course superintendents familiar with bentgrass, ryegrass, fescues and such, the likes of maiden grass, fountain grass and giant reed grass might sound foreign. Indeed, some ornamental grasses, like Chinese silver grass, originated on foreign ground. But as superintendents search for ways to reduce chemical use and labor costs, more may find themselves planting these exotic grasses in the rough, around tee boxes, between fairways.

"They're an excellent plant to have on the golf course," said Richard Kaiser, superintendent of the five-course Fairfield Glade Community Club outside Crossville, Tenn. "Ornamental grasses don't require any attention, compared to shrubs, annuals and perennials. You create aesthetically pleasing areas and have lower maintenance costs."

"There's been increasing interest in ornamental grasses over the last several years," said Dr. Elliott Roberts of Sparta, Tenn., a retired soil and turfgrass scientist who enumerated some of their positives: "No insects, no diseases, no water, no fertilizer after they've gotten started, and no maintenance except to cut them back each year. Able to withstand sub-zero temperatures. Here are plants that will grow from five to 15 feet tall, opening up vistas, then gradually closing them out during the year. They change the colors of the landscape."

"I don't know of anyone in the country who's worked with them longer than I have, and I get more and more enthused by them," said Guy Robbins, superintendent of grounds at the University of Tennessee at Martin. "They're fascinating."

Robbins, who in 25 years has never once needed to spray ornamentals for insects or diseases, said he uses them "because of all the things they do for you. One thing, they provide a cheap [aesthetic] show. They give you virtually 10 or 11 months of color."

"By the time people are outdoors in the early spring, these plants are already coming up and growing. So we get early emergence, early interest and early presence. They look good all spring, summer and fall. They have very attractive blooms in late summer and fall. And when we have a hard freeze they turn brown."

"As soon as the weather starts to cool off the inflorescences start to come out — beautiful, feathery inflorescences," reminisced Roberts, who got his first ornamental roots from Robbins. "They will last late into the fall, even into ice storms and still be beautiful."

Robbins added that many people plant ornamental grasses because of their languid movement and music in the slightest breeze.

Fulton County Club superintendent Lynn Newton has been assisted by club member Harry Reams, who has made what Robbins termed "a horticultural extravaganza" at the South Fulton, Tenn., course. "We like them, their benefits and the look they give us," Newton said.

While Newton started using ornamental grasses to cover up unsightly areas, he quickly discovered they could...