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INSIDE

Lemons & Lemonade  
Nicklaus Design has undertaken the first golf development on a former Superfund site.  

In Capable Hands  
The superintendent at St. Andrews is handling renovations in preparation for the 1995 British Open.  

The Public Arena  
Corporate memberships at upscale daily-fee courses are proving beneficial to both parties.

Turf grads face crowded job market  
By Peter Blais  
The job market for turf school graduates shows few signs of improving while the number of wannabe superintendents continues to grow, according to educators and practitioners.

Wadsworth Golf: The training ground for aspiring architects  
By Mark Leslie  
When project director Glen Doutrich told Craig Schreiner to oversee finished grading of the irrigation heads for an upcoming walkthrough of the Fazio Course at Barton Creek in Austin, Texas, the young apprentice said, “Yes, the owners will probably get real touchy about that.” Doutrich responded: “I’m not worried about the owners. We far exceed their expectations. The walkthrough you’ve got to watch for is Mr. Wadsworth’s.”

Study: Labor trouble on horizon for private clubs  
By Peter Blais  
Increasing labor costs, declining membership and less money available for capital improvements are among the disturbing findings in an annual report on the health of private country clubs.

Openings maintain torrid pace  
A third straight year of 350-plus courses

By Hal Phillips  
A whopping 358 golf courses opened for play during 1993, as public-access development continued to dominate a market that — despite a bevy of cool-headed forecasts — has sustained its considerable momentum.

According to a National Golf Foundation (NGF) report, a full 81 percent of those courses unveiled last year were either daily fee or municipal. Of the 14,639 courses now operating in the United States, 66.6 percent are public-access.

According to Rick Norton, vice-president of the NGF, private course development is more adversely affected by recession, whereas public golf is more often aimed at a particular market segment.

“I think golf is being viewed more and more as a business,” said Norton. It was a very good year in 1993, and I think it shows courses are being built for the market. They’re more

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Average Annual Cost Per Hole

- $34K
- $32K
- $30K
- $28K
- $26K
- $24K
- $22K
- $20K
- $18K
- $16K
- $14K
- $12K
- $10K

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1972 '74 '76 '78 '80 '82 '84 '86 '88 '90 '92
Job market tightens up

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John Piersol said the employment outlook for this course operations program. "We're not a boom like we had in the 1980s," said the director of the school's golf course operations program. "We're back to more normal times."

Part of the problem is too many students. In response to a shortage of superintendents in the 1980s, some colleges beefed up programs to meet the demand.

Pushed by the large number of laid-off, high-tech workers returning to school to develop new careers, UMass saw the number of turf students in its two- and four-year programs nearly double from 75 in 1985 to 140 in 1994, according to Cooper.

Penn State's Stephen Edkin, 35, is among the growing legion of returning students. Edkin earned a four-year degree in finance in the early 1980s. He was a banker for eight years before deciding to change careers. He played golf as a youth and worked as an assistant pro for two years after high school. "I thought about becoming a superintendent after high school," Edkin recalled. "But I didn't have a good model for the profession. So I went into banking. But banking changed a lot in recent years and I needed something else. I told a lot of research and decided this is what I wanted to do."

Edkin will graduate this spring with a four-year degree in turfgrass management. He hopes to land an assistant job in the Northeast. The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association is concerned enough about the growing number of graduates that President Paul Crawford of Palm Beach Country Club recently assigned Joel Jackson of Orlando's Walt Disney complex to chair a long-range planning committee to look into the supply-and-demand aspects of the job market. "Recently in Palm Beach County, 75 qualified, educated superintendents applied for one job opening," Crawford wrote in The Florida Green. "Given our climate, I don't think the situation is going to get better."

Mark Kuhns, head superintendent at suburban Pittsburgh's Oakmont Country Club, site of this summer's U.S. Open, agrees colleges may be grooming too many turf students. But, he adds, many experienced superintendents believe recent graduates need more lower-paying entry jobs that could earn them valuable experience in the unrealistic hope of landing a high-paying position. "There are a lot of jobs for hard workers who are flexible and up on new technology," Kuhns said. "But they have to pay their dues."

One of the best ways is through internships. Kuhns, a Penn State graduate, estimates 14 to 15 interns will have passed through Oakmont and helped prepare the course for the U.S. Open.

"If you've interfered or worked at a big-name club, the possibility of moving up is just that much better. And it's a good thing to be able to put on the resume — helping prepare for the U.S. Open at Oakmont," Kuhns said.

Recent graduates should consider alternatives to assistant superintendent positions for their first job, Piersol recommended. "Most of the jobs we hear about are still for assistant superintendents," he said. "But we're also hearing about more irrigation and spray technician openings.

In Florida, those positions generally pay $18,000 to $20,000 annually, as opposed to the $20,000 to $25,000 assistants usually earn, Piersol said. While lower salaries may make these jobs less attractive, they may be the best way to get experience, he added.

There is also a shortage of qualified golf course mechanics, Piersol said. Lake City offers a one-year certificate for course mechanics. Pay generally ranges from $7.50 to $10 hourly, with abundant overtime often available.

"We'll graduate just seven mechanic students this year. We'd like to get that figure up to 25 to 30. I could place 100 graduates right now," Piersol said.

Texas A&M University's Karen Lodico is a returning student considering alternative turf careers. Lodico graduated in the early 1980s with a marketing degree that served her well in the hotel and travel industry.

"But I wasn't happy," said Lodico, who will earn a turfgrass management degree this spring. "I was more geared toward science. I'd like to get a job in turfgrass sales or irrigation."

Fellow Aggies Chris Cunningham, 24, and Todd Martin, 25, are more-traditional turf students but with non-traditional goals. Cunningham will graduate in May with a double major in marketing and turfgrass management and aspirations for a career in chemical sales. "I'm hoping the two majors will help me more marketable," he said.

Martin will receive his bachelors degree in agronomy this spring, but plans to immediately start graduate school with an eye toward becoming a turf management consultant. "I'm pretty optimistic about the job market," he said.