Canada's best: Wayne Brown earns Super of Year accolades

By MARK LESLIE

RED DEER, Alberta — Not content with the status quo, Reed Deer Golf and Country Club superintendent Wayne Brown is always looking for improvement at his golf course — adding a forward tee here, refining a bunker there. But Brown's vision is not limited to Reed Deer; Indeed, it encompasses all of the Province of Alberta, and farther, and therein lies the substance of why he has been honored as the Canadian Superintendent of the Year.

"I think I won the award for an accumulation of efforts, not 1994 in particular," Brown said. "Deferring credit to others, he added: "I wouldn't have gotten it without the support of my fellow superintendents. It's a group effort. We all help each other. I may have received the award, but it reflects on the Alberta GCSA [Golf Course Superintendents Association] as much as anything. I don't think one person can do it by himself."

While Brown has overseen maintenance of Red Deer GC&CC since 1974, he also helped found the Alberta GCASA in 1987, serving as vice president in 1987-88 and president in 1989-90. He has been integrally involved with the Alberta Turfgrass Research Foundation, handling presidential duties since 1993. The work and educational activities of associations, he feels, are vital to the growth of superintendents, especially in the 1990's, "As a group we are more aware, better educated," Brown said.

"In our Alberta association we are very concerned with environmental issues. To belong, we must have a pesticide application license. We're on top of issues and try to be proactive instead of reactive. "Superintendents are eager for information, going to seminars, etc. We have a seminar every year in Red Deer and sometimes people attend from as far away as 400 to 500 miles."

Agreeing that it is more difficult to be a superintendent today than 10 or 20 years ago, Brown said: "But, by the same token, while there is more expected of you and there is more you have to know, a better-educated person is coming into the workforce and that helps compensate. "In a lot of ways, the superintendent coming out of school now is better prepared. And there are tools we didn't have before we start construction."

Brown's education has been to us [years ago]." Brown said.

"First, we will rebuild one or two greens. They are [native soil] and we will make them available to the golf course industry — even a four-foot wide washed roll! Give us a call for information about our selection of products, and our unique harvesting and washing techniques.

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When not preparing for a tournament, Brown for more than a decade has devoted time to carrying out a master plan for the course.

"For the last 15 years we've been gradually improving the entire course — new and larger tees, and bunkers," Brown said.

With a crew that runs from four in the winter to 16 in summer, he works closely with course architect Bill Robinson of Florence, Ore. Robinson in 1976 renovated Red Deer, which was established in 1922.

"This year," Brown said, "we're just doing a few short tees. We hope to have a new master plan in place by this fall and to start construction in the fall of 1996. We host the Alberta Amateur next summer and want to have that under our belt before we start construction. "First, we will rebuild one or two greens. They are [native soil] and we will make them close to the USGA [U.S. Golf Association] specs."

Interestingly, at Red Deer, poa annua turfgrass is "the playing surface of choice among our members," Brown said. "When we build a new green, they want it to be like the others — all poa. We tell them, in three or four years, it will get there."