The job market for mechanics is good, but it could be better

By JOHN R. PIERSOL

Turf Equipment Manager (TEM) is not a job you hear much about, except when you are in the field. TEM is a job that is becoming more and more important as the industry grows and becomes more competitive.

50 percent mechanic. A turf equipment manager (TEM) has to know about shop design, shop management, how to organize a parts room, how to keep a reasonable inventory of parts, how to order parts properly, how to set up preventive maintenance programs, how to use a computer, and how to train equipment operators and assistant mechanics, as well as perform mechanic tasks. It is specialized, mechanics-requiring training that, unfortunately, is not offered at many schools — this is not auto mechanics or small-engine mechanics.

We've had turf equipment management at Lake City Community College since 1973. In 1988, we moved into a 15,000 square foot building designed specifically for this program. The building is an excellent facility unlike any that I am aware of in the country. Our "secret weapon," however, is our excellent faculty team consisting of program coordinator, Professor Ed Combest, and professors B.J. Cannon and Jim Lones. It is their understanding of the golf industry and the management concepts they teach that make our program work.

There need to be more good TEMs, and we feel the title "turf equipment manager" better represents what the golf industry wants.

Golf Courses are looking for people who are about 30 percent manager and 50 percent mechanic. A TEM has to know about shop design, shop management, how to organize a parts room, how to keep a reasonable inventory of parts, how to order parts properly, how to set up preventive maintenance programs, how to use a computer, and how to train equipment operators and assistant mechanics, as well as perform mechanic tasks. It is specialized, mechanics-requiring training that, unfortunately, is not offered at many schools — this is not auto mechanics or small-engine mechanics.

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By JAY C. LASITER

New course development forces older facilities to keep up with 'Joneses'

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ew golf courses are opening at unprecedented rates across the United States — more than 1,500 since 1992. Most of these are in the public play and municipal segments. While new course openings are occurring across the U.S., the bulk of this development has occurred in the Midwest and Southeast.

Until recently, these areas of the country needed new courses to support increasing demand. However, a new trend seems to be evolving. The number of new golfers are not keeping pace with the number of new golf courses. Now golfers can choose where they play golf and, because they are not spending additional discretionary income to play golf, there isn't enough green fees revenue to go around. Many courses will feel the pinch, prompting them to take action.

I call this challenge the "keeping up with the Joneses" phenomenon. Course "A" has had a loyal golfer following and reasonably stable green fees revenue for years. Course "B" opens down the street with a fancy clubhouse, a challenging course design with a signature name and wall-to-wall green turf. Golfers try Course "B" and many like the aesthetics and amenities enough to migrate some, if not all, of their discretionary spending there. Course "A" now has a significant revenue problem and no simple solution.

Bottom line: Invest in order to keep up with the Joneses. This very scenario happened at Middletown Country Club just outside of Philadelphia...

“Several high-end daily-fee courses opened nearby within the last couple of years and we were losing some green fee revenues,” said Sean McHugh, regional agronomist for Club Corp. of America, which manages the course. “We made the decision to upgrade our irrigation system in order to grow healthier and more beautiful turf.”

Golfers are looking for an experience. The experience involves a combination of factors that include, but are not limited to, friendly personnel, a challenging yet playable track, beautiful, healthy turf and high-quality amenities. There are several options to achieve these experience factors. Let's focus on two related to the course itself.

Option 1: Golf Course Re-Design

It is remarkable to witness the transformation of a course under the skilled hand of a dedicated TEM.
COMMENTARY

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happily, he did not listen to the mayor of New York.

The rest of the rail travel revolution is history. Now, superintendents and others in the golf industry can simply sit and wait for the results of this Green Revolution. Some of the fallout may be very interesting.

"This is a very technocratic area," said Dr. Michael Kenna, director of Green Section research for the U.S. Golf Association. "It's very technical, but with a lot of bureaucracy. For every scientist there are two lawyers standing behind him. The biology and biochemistry is easier than the law regarding it.

"Whoever can learn the most, the fastest, and patent significant parts of it will be able to springboard into the future. That's the race. If you figure out all the genes that affect, say, drought stress, do you own it for other applications like corn?"

Just what we need, right? — more work for lawyers.

For those in turfgrass — the poor sister to farm crops — the problem is funding. If it were corn... " Dr. Sticklen lamented.

Well, it's not corn. But those universities and companies that get the fast jump could reap a huge harvest, in both seeds and money, in the years ahead.

Let's just pray no one spills grass's green gene into a bluejay.

Pete Dye and Jack Nicklaus could have been comedians playing off each other — Nicklaus the straight man, Dye the Jerry Lewis type.

Both men spoke on Pinehurst #2 at the 50th anniversary meeting of the American Society of Golf Course Architects at Pinehurst, N.C. (see full coverage starting on page 23). After Nicklaus referred several times to

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