More graduates chasing fewer jobs?

Assistant positions plentiful; head jobs in short supply

By PETER BLAIS

The demand for assistant superintendent remains strong, which bodes well for the turf school students set to graduate this spring who will fill many of those positions. However, even in the face of a record 468 new course openings in 1995, making the leap from assistant to head superintendent remains a challenging proposition.

“We have heard about many more assistant jobs than we have graduates to fill them,” said John ‘Trey’ Rogers, associate professor at Michigan State University. “The only people who seem to be having problems are those who have restricted themselves to a certain geographic area.” Faculty at Ohio State and Pennsylvania State universities echoed Rogers’ sentiments.

More graduates chasing fewer jobs? As turf grads grow in number, so do worries of saturation

By J. BARRY MOTHES

The number of graduates from college turfgrass programs this year will again be higher than last year. That, along with an increase in two-year degree and certificate programs, has fueled a strong perception there may be too many turfgrass graduates heading into the job market.

“I think there might be a bit of an overload,” said William Torello, a professor of turfgrass management at the University of Massachusetts for the past 15 years. “I think there is saturation level and I think we’re real near it — if not at it.”

“But almost 100 percent of our people do get placed. They may not all be assistant superintendents right away, but they get work. The golf course industry is certainly becoming loaded with trained people.”

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, which represents golf superintendents, has been working to establish a national database of assistant superintendent positions.

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New player emerges in group buying

By LOU PRATO

ELLIOTTSVILLE, Md. — A new nationwide buying cooperative aimed at getting major price breaks for golf course owners and superintendents on everything from chemicals to maintenance equipment is seeking its first charter members in the East.

National Turf Cooperative, Inc. (NTC), based here near Baltimore, expects to have at least 250 members signed up when it starts buying seeds, fertilizer, and other such goods from manufacturers and suppliers in October of 1996. NTC will concentrate initially on buying products necessary for the development and maintenance of golf course greens. The number of graduates from college turfgrass programs this year will again be higher than last year.

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Pre-fab clubhouses keep priorities on course

By PETER BLAIS

Golf developers are heeding the advice of course designers and installing temporary clubhouses, allowing the course to establish a reputation and generate revenue before building a first-class clubhouse facility. While the idea might seem a bit self-serving since course architects are paid for the course they design rather than the clubhouse that borders it, few would argue that it is the course rather than the clubhouse that first attracts players to a golf facility.

“Getting the course right and waiting on the permanent clubhouse is a concept I endorse,” said course architect David Horn of Architerra PC, a course design firm in Catasauqua, Pa. “You can get a good, prefab clubhouse for $100,000 or less to get you through the first few years until the cash flow is sufficient to build a permanent one.”

In fact, if done right, a prefab clubhouse can be attractive and may suffice much longer than a developer may initially think. Horn said he has sent many clients to see the supposedly temporary facility at Center Valley (Pa.) Club just south of Bethlehem, Pa.

Geoffrey Cornish-designed Center
Prefab clubhouses

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Buena Vista adds new California track


BVGH was formed in early April. The firm specializes in the acquisition, ownership and operation of golf properties. Buena Vista Hospitality Group is a real-estate and hospitality management company, while Hanover Capital is a real-estate investment and merchant banking firm.

Buena Vista also manages Buena Vista Palace Resort & Spa at Walt Disney World Village, Fla.; PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; Lodge & Bath Club at Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; LPGA International in Daytona Beach, Fla.; Steele Canyon Golf & Country Club in San Diego; and WestWinds Golf & Country Club in Newmarket, Md.

Valley opened for play in June 1992, according to Director of Golf Larry Wise. The developers leased three 14'-by-40' modular units from a Philadelphia firm (GE Capital) and arranged them in a U-shape. They placed the units on footers and cable them down to make certain they stayed in place. They landscaped extensively inside and out and built pitched, wooden roofs over each.

On the inside of the U, they built a 40'-by-60' patio and covered it with a framed tent. The tented area contains an outside restaurant that seats 110, allowing it to accommodate almost any outing plus regular diners. The tent is lighted, music is piped in and intercoms keep golfers informed about what is happening on the course.

At the entrance to the tent, the developers added a wooden structure and fan system housing a barbecue area where pig roasts and ribs are cooked. A bar next to the cookery handles drink orders.

"We've had an excellent response from our customers," Wise said. "The only down side is that we might have missed out on a few major corporate outings or entertaining some upscale clients. But we wanted to get the course accepted and operating. It's definitely helped us establish the course as one of the best in the area."

The green fees at Central Valley are $48.75 weekdays and $56.50 weekends. "The fact that we have a supposedly temporary clubhouse hasn't affected rounds or green fees at all," Wise said.

In fact, there is really nothing temporary about the Central Valley facility, according to Wise. The club purchased the units for about $250,000 shortly after they were installed and plans on using them as the main clubhouse for at least three more years. Once a stick-built clubhouse is erected — that Wise estimates will cost $2 million — the prefab units will still host outings.

Another advantage of prefab clubhouses is that they give developers the opportunity to see what type of amenities their customers prefer before actually committing millions of dollars to a permanent clubhouse with facilities that could go unused, according to Robert Harper, director of golf at Wild Wing Plantation.

"A temporary clubhouse gives you a barometer of the type of guests you have so that you won't pump in and spend money on things they won't use, anyway," said Harper, who also worked out of temporary facilities at Tournament Player Club courses in Memphis, Tenn., and Miami.

Wild Wing leased two double wides for nine months when it first opened back in 1991, Harper said. The club dressed them up with landscaping and outside decking before erecting a permanent, 35,000-square-foot facility.

"Ours were color-coordinated and very well done," Harper remembered of the units the club rented from Space Master of Charlotte, S.C. for approximately $900 per month per unit. "By the time they were in the ground, you couldn't even tell they were temporaries. That's important because that first impression is often a lasting one. As soon as we were done with them they were on the road to another new club down in Florida."

Some companies are trying to take the word "temporary" out of the prefab clubhouse business altogether. Commercial Structures of Nappanee, Ind., custom designs, manufactures and installs modular clubhouses that can be leased or purchased, according to company Vice President Eric Johnson.

They are built to the same BOCA codes as stick-built structures and generally range in price from $30 to $45 per square foot, well below the cost of traditional clubhouses, Johnson said. They are designed so that more space can be added on at a later date.

"Developers usually go this route because they see it as a quick fix," Johnson explained. "But they are finding they can keep them as permanent structures once the landscaping is done. We can also do the drawings and construction in a matter of four to six weeks compared to several months for a regular clubhouse. We see the prefab clubhouse market as a niche we'd like to develop."


golf and recreational finance

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Refinance an 18-hole private course.

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Refinance 144 holes of golf plus a credit line for future acquisitions.

$11,500,000 - THE LODGE OF FOUR SEASONS, Lake of Ozarks, MO
Refinance a 311-room lodge, 211-slip marina and 45 holes of golf.

$5,000,000 - KEMPER SPORTS MANAGEMENT, Chicago, IL
Refinance an 18-hole course plus construction for a second nine holes.

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$2,500,000 - GEOERTOWN COUNTRY CLUB, Georgetown, MA
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$3,500,000 - THE SEA RANCH GOLF LINKS, Sea Ranch, CA
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$2,400,000 - WHITTER GC & VICTORIA GC, Los Angeles, CA
Refinance two 18-hole public courses.

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Refinance an 18-hole course plus construction of an additional 18-hole course.

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$8,500,000 - ANGEL FIRE RESORT, near Taos, NM
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$9,500,000 - GOLF CLUB OF ILLINOIS & BURL HILL GC, Chicago, IL
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$7,000,000 - ELY BOWLING, Northern NJ
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$2,600,000 - CASSELBERRY GC, Orlando, FL
Construction loan for new daily fee course.

$3,600,000 - SOUTH RIDING GC, Washington, DC
Construction loan for new daily fee golf course.

$2,800,000 - GREEN ACRES LANES, Lake Worth, FL
Acquisition loan for 60 lane bowling center.

$2,500,000 - SHATTUCK GC, Jefferson, NH
Acquisition loan for existing daily fee course.

$3,500,000 - RANCHO VISTOSO GC, Tucson, AZ
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