

MOVIN' ON UP

Superintendent to GM called natural move

By PETER BLAIS

In terms of expertise, superintendents are the most logical people to be the general manager at one or several golf courses, according to Scott Nissley, director of operations for three of Meadowbrook Golf Group's Chicagoland courses.

"The person who can provide a quality

golf course is a valuable individual," Nissley said. "The superintendent is the best-qualified person to do that."

But golf pros and food and beverage managers usually get the high-level jobs because, in their drive to provide perfect conditions, superintendents often forget the need to generate profits and maximize return on investment for the course owner while providing a "total recreational experience" for the golfer.

Nissley need only look at his own situation. At each of his three courses, the on-site leader (the equivalent of the course general manager) is the head pro. And yet, their boss (Nissley) is a long-time superintendent.

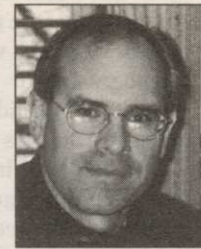
"It never occurred to me that I couldn't do this job," Nissley said. "I've had to admit there was a lot for me to learn, which isn't easy for someone in his 40s. But I've learned a lot about insurance, food and beverage, marketing, taking green fees and working with customers."

While growing up on the family farm in Lancaster, Pa., Nissley worked sum-

mers at nearby Indian Springs Golf Course, later renamed Four Seasons. Armed with a bachelor's degree and an industrial arts major from Millersville State College, he taught high school for a half year before golf lured him back to Four Seasons. He worked on the grounds crew and as assistant superintendent for two years before being named head superintendent in 1976.

Nissley remained at Four Seasons through 1988, working for three different owners during that time and extensively upgrading the course. The Oakbrook (Ill.) Sports Core, operated by the Village of Oakbrook, hired him as director of golf to oversee Oakbrook Golf Course (GC).

"It never occurred to me to be something other than a superintendent," Nissley said. "I wanted to do more construction, be involved with more complex projects and be where things were happening. That's what brought me to the Chicagoland area. It was a way to get to where golf was king. Professionally, I just needed to leave Lancaster and this provided a lot of solutions."



Scott Nissley

The year before Nissley's arrival, floods drowned nine holes of Oakbrook GC and neighboring Butler National, longtime home of the PGA's Western Open. Butler and Oakbrook combined their dry holes to make an 18-hole track for that year's Western. The village brought Nissley aboard to re-

store the flood-ravaged nine, oversee the maintenance contract with the private company then maintaining Oakbrook GC, and determine whether to continue the maintenance contract.

Nissley determined the village would be better off operating the course itself. He hired a crew, built a new maintenance facility, dug irrigation wells, installed cart paths, improved drainage and renovated landscaping in line with the original plans drafted by architect Roger Packard.

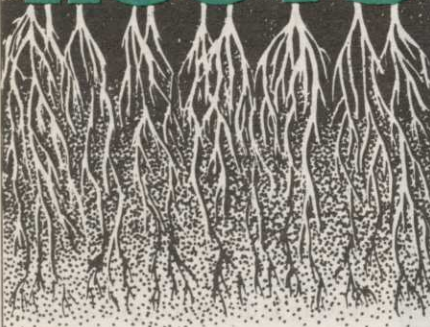
The DuPage County Airport Authority was planning a golf course and hired Nissley as a consultant in 1989 and as a full-time golf director in 1990. Nissley oversaw construction of Prairie Landing Golf Course, the Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed layout that opened in 1994 and was named to *Golf Digest's* Top 10 New Courses You Can Play in 1995.

Nissley became Prairie Landing's general manager in 1995, about the same time the airport authority signed a management consultant agreement with North American Golf (NAG). Meadowbrook purchased NAG in 1996 and named Nissley director of operations of three Chicagoland courses — Prairie Landing, Red Tail Golf Club and The Course at Aberdeen (set to open in June).

"One of the main things I'd like to do is try to alleviate the antagonism that exists between management companies and superintendents," Nissley said. "I want Meadowbrook to be a company that superintendents want to be a part of. A superintendent can be and have a part of the action here, something that's difficult at a one-owner course."

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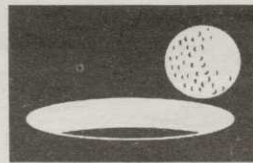
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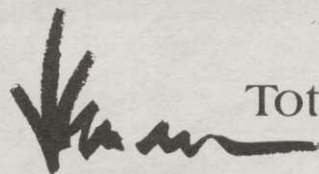


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CIRCLE #139

Owners' association enters on-line world

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The National Golf Course Owners Association recently introduced its home page on the Internet.

The Website, which can be found at <http://www.ngcoa.com> features information about the association's upcoming events and member services, including publications, conferences and trade shows, the Smart Buy Purchasing Program, and more. There are also selected articles from *Golf Business* magazine and a "user-friendly" membership application.

Plans include a listing of NGCOA member courses, a secure chat area or bulletin board, on-line surveys, and hyperlinks to home pages of member courses and Smart Buy suppliers. "These links will make it easier for owners and operators to navigate the web and get the greatest benefit for the least amount of time and effort," said Jim Bailey, NGCOA membership director.

One addition that is near completion is "learning-links" for determining insurance needs. The purpose is to help owners and operators learn about risk management and how to lower insurance costs.