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 returns 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 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 summers and winters desiccation.

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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 restore the 180 acres of land, 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 cast iron, improved drainage and renovated landscaping in line with the original plans drafted by architect Roger Packard.

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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.

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 Digest magazine and a "user-friendly" membership application.

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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.