ORLANDO, Fla. — David Fearis, a 31-year member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, will be elected president of the national association at February's International Conference and Show here. Fearis, 52, is head superintendent at Blue Hills Country Club in Kansas City, Mo., and has served on the GCSAA board since 1993. He responded recently to a list of questions posed by Golf Course News.

David Fearis: If I had to list a primary goal, it would be the education of the employer/influential golfer. If we can educate this group to better understand the golf course superintendent's job, the result could be increased job security, recognition, compensation, and job opportunities.

This actually is part of the mission statement of the membership standard's initiative. Right now, job security isn't a description often found in our profession. You hear numerous stories about a golf course superintendent who has been at a golf facility for 10 to 15 years and has one bad year and is fired.

Why? Because in many cases, that employer/influential golfer doesn't understand our jobs. We have raised the standard of golf course conditions so high that many golfers expect this year after year. Yet we are still dealing with Mother Nature.

GCSAA is working to provide programs to educate the employer/influential golfer.

David Fearis: Anything similar to the PGA's Career Links program?

Fearis: The obvious one is education. We are offering an increased number of seminars dealing with business, management and communication skills.

Also, we now award annual Continuing Education Units for approved seminars offered by other associations like the PGA, CMA or companies like National Seminars, Padgett Thompson, Fred Pryor, etc. These companies and associations offer many good seminars dealing with subjects, other than agronomics, which could further the golf course superintendent's skills to allow him to become a general manager or a director of golf.

The mission of the membership standards initiative is to increase the value of the golf course superintendent in the eyes of employers and influential golfers, resulting in increased compensation, security, recognition and job opportunities for qualified members. To me, this means showing employers that the superintendent has a high level of education, manages the largest staff, budget, and asset at a golf facility, and is therefore very qualified to become a director of golf and/or a general manager.

GCSAA to honor Pebble's Horton with Environmental award

ORLANDO, Fla. — Citing him for efforts that "personify what superintendents strive for each and every day," the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has chosen Edward C. "Ted" Horton to receive the 1999 President's Award for Environmental Leadership.

Horton, vice president of resource management at Pebble Beach Co., will be honored at the Golf, Government and Environmental General Session scheduled at 8:45 a.m. Feb. 12, at the International Golf Course Superintendents Conference here.

GCSAA's board of directors selected Horton in recognition of his environmental leadership at Pebble Beach and his pivotal role in the Golf and the Environment Summit process that led to developing the groundbreaking Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States.

"Ted Horton's work has long been respected within the golf industry," said GCSAA president George Renault III. "Golf is truly a friend of the environment, and Ted's efforts personify what superintendents strive for each and every day."

Horton's environmental initiatives at Pebble Beach have included golf course recycling and effluent irrigation programs. He also works with community groups and is widely respected as a speaker on the topic of golf's environmental impacts.

The awards ceremony also will include presentation of the national winners in the GCSAA Environmental Steward Awards (ESAs) competition. The ESAs honor environmental excellence among golf courses and recognize the innovative practices that support and preserve and enhance golf's environment. The conference will conclude with a panel discussion on the innovative practices that support and preserve and enhance golf's environment.

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"It was a better opportunity," Renault explained of his move from a Burning Tree Club in Bethesda, Md., where he served as head superintendent for the past eight years. Prior to Burning Tree, Renault was head superintendent at Chevy Chase (Md.) Club; Penderbrook Golf Club in Fairfax, Va.; and Goose Creek Country Club in Leesburg, Va. A 20-year GCSAA member, Renault has served on the GCSAA Board of Directors since 1993 and chairs numerous committees. He is also a member of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act Golf Advisory Commission, Watson Fellowship Selection Committee and Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) government issues committee.

Renault earned a certificate in golf and turfgrass management from the University of Maryland. He and his wife, Lucinda, have two children: George, 21 and Lucy, 17. Continued on page 32

Outgoing president off to warmer climes

By PETER BLAIR

NAPLES, Fla. — Eagle's Creek Country Club here has hired outgoing GCSAA President George Renault, as head superintendent. Renault assumed his new position Jan. 1. Eagle's Creek, a private, 18-hole layout, opened in 1980. Renault's first projects at his new club will include rebuilding the greens and installing a new irrigation system.

George Renault

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Fears Q&A

Continued from page 29

proven methods of communication. Burnout was always there; our jobs 10, 15 and 20 years ago were not easy. It requires working long hours and dealing with Mother Nature on a daily basis.

Expectations of golfers are extremely high and oftentimes unrealistic. However, I saw an article published in the USGA Green Section about how golfers wanted faster greens. The article was written in the 1920s. To avoid burnout, I would recommend superintendents have other interests or hobbies. I know superintendents who are volunteer firemen; are active in their church; coach their son's or daughter's sports team; serve on the city council. This is easy to say, but really hard to do.

My other interest is my involvement in GCSAA. Golf course superintendents are workaholics; they spend 60 to 70 hours a week on their jobs. So it only makes sense that they need to get their minds off their jobs and focus on other interests or hobbies.

GCN: How has the consolidation of golf course ownership and subsequent growth of management companies affected the superintendent?

Fears: Corporate America has entered our profession. Golf has become a business first and a recreation-based game second. A result has been the growth of management companies. Obviously, there are pros and cons. They do offer a superintendent with good business, management, and communication skills, an opportunity to advance to positions like regional agronomists, general managers, and/or directors of golf.

One of the negatives, some say, is they seem to be here to stay.

Who knows? Like them or not, they seem to be here to stay.

Fears: I haven't heard of any adverse reaction. GCSAA realizes that its strength lies in its chapters. Therefore, we have worked very hard to provide services and programs to help our chapters. We publish a 55-page booklet, which lists these services and programs, which directly benefit the chapters and their members.

Trust is the word, and hopefully golf course superintendents realize GCSAA is there to help them with their jobs and advance the profession.

GCN: How do you plan to handle the many responsibilities of being GCSAA president and operate a golf club at the same time?

Fears: It definitely is a challenge. When I was with Scotts & Co., I learned time and organizational skills which have helped me immensely.

Also, it is pretty obvious you have to have a good crew. I am very fortunate to have an exceptional one. They are dedicated and very professional.

It also helps that I am only 40 minutes away from GCSAA headquarters. That cuts down on travel time when board and/or committee meetings are there.

It is a time-consuming job. But if I weren't having fun, I wouldn't do it. I'm also fortunate to work with another group of dedicated and professional people — the board of directors and the GCSAA staff. Both will make my job a lot easier.

GCN: What is the major attribute you bring to the job of GCSAA president?

Fears: I consider myself a listener and a communicator. I attribute these two characteristics to two people — Dr. Bill Daniel and Gerry Sweda.

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Gerry Sweda was the person who did most of the training when I worked for Scotts. I remember spending one whole day with Gerry on the subject of listening. Listening is a skill and actually takes a lot of practice. Most people hear, but don't listen.

I can listen and communicate the needs and concerns of the membership.

Specifying Putter creeping bentgrass and every thing falls into place.

From a turf management perspective, Putter is a hardy variety with fine leaf texture that features an upright growth habit, high shoot density and improved disease resistance. Putter is also very aggressive against Poa annua.

From a golfer's point of view, Putter's rich, dark, bluish-green color looks great. From tee to fairway to green, Putter is also very aggressive against Poa annua. Greens up early in the spring and holds its color late into the fall for a longer season of use.

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