Fears assumes presidency at Orlando conclave

Q&A

ORLANDO, Fla. — David Fears, 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. Fears, 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 Fears: 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 standards 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.

GCN: What is GCSAA doing to help superintendents move along their career paths and up into positions such as general manager, director of golf, etc.? Anything similar to the PGA’s Career Links program?

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

Also, we now award external Continuing Education Units for approved seminars offered by other associations like the PGA, CMAA 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 Conference and Show.

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 efficient 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 they support, preserve and enhance golf’s environment. The session will conclude with a panel discussion with top executives of the allied associations of golf discussing their associations and their views on the role of the golf course superintendent.

The President’s Award for Environmental Leadership was established in 1991 to recognize “an exceptional environmental contributions to the game of golf: a contribution that further exemplifies the golf course superintendent’s image as a steward of the land.”

...and Florida’s Jones with Distinguished Service Award

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has confirmed that long-time member David Pondel will receive the association’s 1999 Distinguished Service Award.

Jones was superintendent at Banyan Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Fla., from 1980 until his retirement in April 1998.

He is currently the East Coast sales manager of Toro Aquatic Equipment. The award will be presented to Jones during the opening ceremonies at the GCSAA’s 70th International Golf Course Conference and Show here, Feb. 8-14.

Jones is being recognized for his 33 years in the turf industry, where he has been an innovator and leader in the business. He was instrumental in the late 1970s in bringing the white amur grass carp into the state to help control aquatic weeds and reduce the amount of chemicals used in waterways.

Jones has served as president of the local Palm Beach Chapter of the Florida GCSA, president of the Florida Turfgrass Association and was the editor and publisher of the national award-winning magazine, The Florida Green, for 13 years.

He has been named editor emeritus in honor of his contributions to the growth and success of the magazine. In 1987 Jones received the Florida GCSA Distinguished Service Award and also received the Florida Turfgrass Association’s Wreath of Grass Award.

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 1990. Renault’s first projects at his new club will include re-building the greens and installing a new irrigation system.

“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 Chevey 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 chaired numerous committees. He is also a member of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act Golf Advisory Committee, 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.