Superintendent salaries now averaging over $57,000

By JAY FINEGAN

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The average base salary for golf course superintendents rose this year to $57,057, according to a survey by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

Half of all superintendents earn more than $50,000 a year, 25 percent make more than $68,000, and 10 percent pull down more than $88,000. The salaries represent a seven percent increase from the average base salaries in 1998, or an annualized average increase of 3.6 percent.

For assistant superintendents, the average base salary rose to $29,638, up from $27,981 in 1998 — a six percent jump. Some 77 percent of assistants are salaried employees; the remainder are paid hourly.

The 2000 “employment profile” by GCSAA also shows an average age of 41 for all superintendents, while the median experience level is 11 years, up from 10 in 1998. The data show that, on average, superintendents take their first position as head super at age 30, with 15 percent of them still in the profession at age 50.

In education, the profile showed that nearly 80 percent of all superintendents hold a minimum of a two-year certificate, an associate’s or bachelor’s degree, or a graduate degree.

The results of the survey, based on 3,527 responses, show a modest rise in the number of golf facilities run by professional management companies — 14 percent this year, versus 13 percent in 1998. Much of the increase, the report said, appears to have come from an increase in the numbers of relatively small management outfits.

Other findings from the study include these:

• The median budget managed by superintendents is more than $550,000, including maintenance, capital equipment and payroll. Median crew size checked in at 17.

• As in 1998, less than a third of superintendents indicated a desire to become a general manager (GM). Superintendents most often report to GMs (29 percent), the survey found, followed by green committee/board of directors (19 percent) and directly to course owners (18 percent).

• Nearly 75 percent of survey respondents worked at 18-hole courses, with 41 percent of them private, 38 percent daily-fee and 12 percent municipal.

Gray leaf spot forces mass regrassing at Philadelphia CC

By JOEL JOYNER


On certain golf courses in the region, turf damage amounted to as much as 90 percent. At the private Philadelphia Country Club, opened in 1930, head superintendent Michael McNulty knows quite well the constant struggle to maintain ryegrass fairways against gray leaf spot.

The club installed ryegrass on its fairways in 1982, and McNulty first noticed gray leaf spot in 1994. “We’ve been successful using Heritage and Daconil,” McNulty said about the fungicides used to control the problem. But now, ryegrass vulnerability to gray leaf spot has prompted a more financially prudent approach.

As one of the last remaining courses in the Philadelphia region to offer ryegrass fairways, this year will mark the beginning of the club’s conversion to bentgrass. The 27-hole layout will regrass nine holes at a time, hoping to complete the first nine by early next spring. For the initial phase, McNulty killed off the rye by gassing it with methyl bromide and by laying down the granular product Basamid on the fairways and tees.

“We’re also taking the opportunity to change over our greens to Penn A1 bentgrass at the same time,” McNulty said. Continued on page 12

After wet summer in N.E., supers still battling moss

By JOEL JOYNER

FALMOUTH, Maine — Head superintendent Scott Cybulski at the Falmouth Country Club has been fighting moss growth for a number of years, but this year it has presented “a drastic problem” in Maine.

“The combination of constant wet weather and golfers wanting us to shave the greens down resulted in a lot of high undulated areas going to moss,” Cybulski said. “Aggressive aeration and heavy top dressing have suppressed the problem for now, but the weather and level of play restricted our opportunities to top dress earlier this year, which allowed the moss problem to develop.”

Cybulski has controlled the moss with a heavy top dressing of an “iron sulfate and straight-up sand” mixture. Metallic-based fungicides have been the traditional method for moss control, but better sense prevailed in eliminating the spraying of mercury, zinc, and even lead (back in the 50s and 60s).

Continued on page 10
We've just started to mow and they look beautiful."

WHITFORD CC ALSO REGRASSED

After experiencing a similar situation at Whitford Country Club, in Exton, Pa., head superintendent Chris Givens is satisfied with their regrassing last year. Using the L-93, Crenshaw, and Southshore bentgrass fairway mixture instead of the previously laid Crenshaw, and Southshore worked out well.

The 1998 outbreak of gray leaf spot damaged roughly 75 percent of the turf at Whitford, but the new bentgrass fairways, Givens said, "are perfect - a little brown patch earlier in the season and some dollar spot just starting to show now. But with the type of weather conditions we've had this year, it has worked out well."

Philadelphia's warm, humid summer created ideal conditions for the gray leaf disease to explode, disseminating spores by wind, water, animals, shoes and equipment. Other factors contributing to gray leaf development, typically, are new turf, shaded areas, high nitrogen levels from fertilizers and any other general strain on the grass. The gray leaf spot, also known as "blast," often strikes with an unusual outbreak cycle of every two to three years. It may attack one year, be dormant or mild for the next couple of years, and then destructive the next.

Remembering the 1998 outbreak, courses in the Philadelphia area aren't likely to take any chances with another overwhelming eruption of the blast disease in 2001. They also don't relish the prospect of draining their maintenance budgets in the future with multiple applications of fungicides.

For its conversion to bentgrass, Philadelphia CC brought in Joe Duich, Ph.D., former head of the Penn State turf grass program. Duich also developed some of the most disease-resistant new bentgrasses available in the turf industry, such as the Penn 'A' and 'G' series for greens. Using grass seed mixtures typically provides some defense against turf disease. Three varieties - L-93, Crenshaw and Southshore - seem to work effectively together in the Pennsylvania area. Disease resistance is the L-93's most distinctive feature, whereas the Crenshaw provides a strong heat tolerance and the Southshore rounds out the mixture for balance.

Though creeping bentgrass is not completely invulnerable to gray leaf spot, it is more resistant to the disease. Using bentgrass in Pennsylvania will also be environmentally beneficial - smaller amounts of fungicide will be required to maintain the attractiveness and health of the course.

Enough is enough for superintendent Michael McNulty at Philadelphia Country Club, who hopes to match the success that Givens has had at Whitford.

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EASTON, Pa. — Jim Baird, a Ph.D. agronomist, has joined the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association. He will be taking over for Matt Nelson in the Pennsylvania office and visiting golf courses in the New York and New Jersey area. Nelson will remain with the Green Section as the agronomist for the Northwest Region. This year Nelson will be visiting courses in the Northwest, Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest.

Baird received his undergraduate degree from Colorado State University and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Auburn University. He spent four years on the Oklahoma State University faculty and his past three years on the faculty staff at Michigan State University.