Evolution—
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setting as the reason(s) people pursue the career.
An analysis of golf course superintendents in the
United States reveals the average individual is 41 year
old, earns $57,057 annually, has been a superintendent
for 11 years and has worked at two different facilities.
These figures represent the mean, thus significant dif-
fferences may exist depending on region of the country,
the number of holes at a course, course type (private,
resort, public), number of employees supervised, size of
maintenance budget, etc. Those who complete a rigor-
ous certification program administered by the Golf
Course Superintendents Association of American gen-
erally earn higher salaries and have a greater opportu-
nity to advance in the profession or in the administra-
tion of their golf facility. It is not unusual for a superin-
tendent who earns in excess of six figures.

The Future

A 1997 study by the National Golf Foundation exam-
ined trends in the golf industry for a period from 1986-96. It found the growth in golf facility construction sig-
nificantly outstripped demand. In real terms, the supply

HARD TO BELIEVE BUT AUGUST IS JUST AROUND THE COR-
NER and that means it’s time to play the MGCSA Championship. This
year’s tournament takes place at Wayzata Country Club on August
20th. Pictured above is Wayzata’s tenth hole.

of golf courses grew 2,350 including a rate of 392 courses
per year from 1991-96. In terms of golfer demand, the 1986-96
period saw an increase from 20 to 25 million golfers,
however the number of golfers (25 million) and rounds
played (460 million) has remained essentially the same from
1990-95.

In 1999, the NGF updated its study and found golf facil-
ities continued to be grow at impressive rates. In 1997 there
were 16,010 golf courses and that figure grew to 16,743 in
1999. Annual golf course openings topped 500 for the first
time in 1999. In terms of golfer participation, an all-time
number of rounds played (564.1 million) and the second-
highest number of golfers (26.44 million) were realized in 1999.

Most observers are cautiously optimistic that the growth
of golfers will gain momentum as the “baby boomer” gen-
eration begins to age. There are approximately 78 million
baby boomers, and this group was responsible for the
biggest growth in the game when it reached 20-30 years of
age. Research indicates that golfers spend more and play
more as they age. Thus the boomers should fuel growth.
The recent success of younger players and minorities on the
professional tours will likely spur participation as well.

For the superintendent profession, the expansion in golf
courses and other golf facilities such as driving ranges,
pitch and putts, etc., plus a probable increase in golfer
demand is likely to result in good career opportunities for
some time to come.

(Editor’s Note: Information gathered from GCSAA archives
and Golf Course Management Magazine)