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Why Your Course Superintendent is Your Silent Playing Partner

by JERRY LEMONS, CGCS

Early in the morning, while the air is still calm and fresh, the dew still covering every blade of grass, and before the sun begins to peek from the horizon, a new day is beginning for the golf course superintendent. It is the golf course superintendent who knows that soon after the sun has risen, golfers will cover the course that he and his staff have meticulously groomed. The golf course superintendent is behind every golf round played. It is the superintendent who "lives" with his course to insure that the conditions will be the best that they can be, whether for that important tournament or for the "Tuesday afternoon ladies," the golf course superintendent's work reflects upon every round played.

The golf course superintendent has always been a vital part of the game of golf. Old Tom Morris, who was one of the most profound greenskeepers (taken from keeper of the green), not only was a superior golfer, but spent over forty years of his life during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, maintaining some of golf's most historic courses including Prestwick and St. Andrews. Old Tom's dedication to the game and to the importance of golf course maintenance began an era of professional golf course maintenance that has exploded with golf itself.

Although most golfers are familiar with the role of the golf professional, they should realize that the golf course superintendent is responsible for the care, playability and quality of the golf course, not the golf professional. The golf course superintendent's role has emerged from what used to be a "simple grass cutter" to a manager of a fine quality turfgrass. The reasons are quite evident. Golf course management has changed dramatically in the last two decades because the golfer is willing to pay for the quality of a golf course he wants. Fast greens, plush fairways and manicured turf are not just standards for major tournaments anymore. Golfers demand these conditions daily, and it is the golf course superintendent's expertise which makes these conditions possible.

Who is the golf course superintendent and what does he actually do?

As the demand for excellent golf course conditions have increased, so have the

demands on the knowledgeability of the golf course superintendent. Today's golf course superintendents are highly trained professionals, educated to prepare golf courses for today's golfer. The superintendent's desires are not unlike the golfers; to develop and maintain in a golf course the very best quality humanly possible.

Today's golf course superintendents are college educated. Local, regional and national seminars keep them informed and up-to-date on today's innovative ideas on golf course maintenance procedures.

THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA IS THE GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT'S LINK TO EDUCATION AND THE NEWEST RESEARCH.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, based in Lawrence, Kansas, is the golf course superintendent's link to education and the newest research available. Not only does the association boast one of the largest national conferences and shows in the nation, the GCSAA also has several regional conferences to keep the superintendents up-to-date. The GCSAA also recognizes superintendents through a certification program. A certified golf course superintendent has been tested and proven through experience and education that they are highly qualified professionals.

The continued growth of the golf course superintendent's position is easily traced from year to year. Looking back 20 years and observing the condition of the courses and even in the design of courses compared to today's, it is apparent that the demand of today's golfer, on a daily basis, is similar to what the "pros asked for them." This has ignited a need for better management skills, better equipment, improved grass varieties and more efficient chemicals. The superintendent must put all of this together to provide the golfers with the ideal golfing conditions he has come to expect. Sometimes operating on shoestrings, without ideal conditions! More often than not, it is the superintendent who falls victim to the unpredictable and sometimes impossible

and suddenly his job is in jeopardy.

The golf course superintendent is always confronted by new problems such as "black layer", pythium, sand layering, chemical burn, and not enough or too much rainfall at the wrong time. By the way, have you seen some of the new designs in golf courses that have huge mounds and sloping greens that only the goats of St. Andrews could stand on much less be carefully manicured and maintained by mortal man??

Jack Kidwell, a longtime golf course architect, past superintendent and past golf professional, once said, "We can design the best golf course in the world, have the very finest building materials, but leave out the most important ingredient, a golf course superintendent who understands how the course is to be maintained, and the golf course will not be successful."

The superintendent has learned how to manage his course by living with it. All golf courses are different and must be treated as such. Even greens on the same golf course will need different management techniques. Ask the superintendent on any given course, and he will tell you of his "problem greens" whether the greens be new or old.

The golf course superintendent is not only involved in the game of golf, he is also often responsible for the tennis, pool and clubhouse grounds. The budgets that the superintendent must manage are reflected on the quality of course that he is expected to maintain. Many golf course budgets exceed one half a million dollars and some are in excess of one million. It is the superintendent and his staff that brightens up the entrance of the club, adds the extra color to the clubhouse grounds, and cares for the trees and shrubs that are unreplaceable in a single lifetime.

So it is the golf course superintendent who is dedicated to the game of golf and to the course that he is responsible for. Tom Watson once said, "In this day and age, a golf course superintendent has to be an educated scientist, agronomist, economist and a good people manager. If you put all this together, with a love for a piece of earth, then you've got a good golf course superintendent."

— EXECUTIVE GOLFER 

TEST FOR STRESS

Are you feeling "burned out" because of job-related stress? A simple way to tell if you have a stress-prone personality is to rate yourself on how you typically react to the situations listed below. Give yourself the following points: 4-always; 3-frequently; 2-sometimes; 1-never.

1. Do you try to do as much as possible in the least amount of time?
2. Do you become impatient with delays or interruptions?
3. Do you always have to win at games in order to enjoy yourself?
4. Do you tend to speed up your car to beat the red light?
5. Are you unlikely to ask for help with a problem?
6. Do you constantly seek the respect and admiration of others?
7. Are you overly critical of the way others do their work?
8. Do you look at your clock or watch often?
9. Do you spread yourself "too thin" in terms of your time?
10. Do you constantly strive to better your position?
11. Do you habitually do more than one thing at a time?
12. Do you get angry or irritable often?
13. Do you have little time for hobbies - or for yourself?
14. Do you talk quickly and hasten conversations?
15. Do you consider yourself hard-driving?
16. Do your friends or relatives consider you to be hard-driving?
17. Do you constantly get involved in multiple projects?
18. Do you have a lot of deadlines in your work?
19. Do you feel guilty if you relax and do nothing?
20. Do you take on too many responsibilities?

TEST FOR STRESS SCORING

- 20-30: Nonproductive or understimulated
 30-50: Good balance
 50-60: Stressed
 60 - Candidate for heart disease.

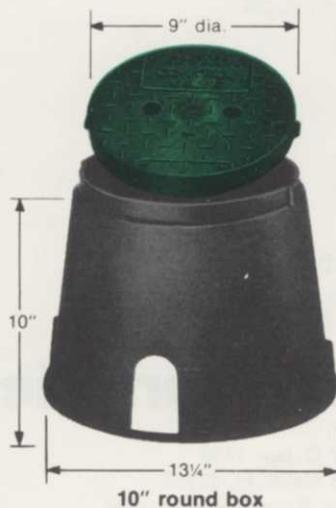
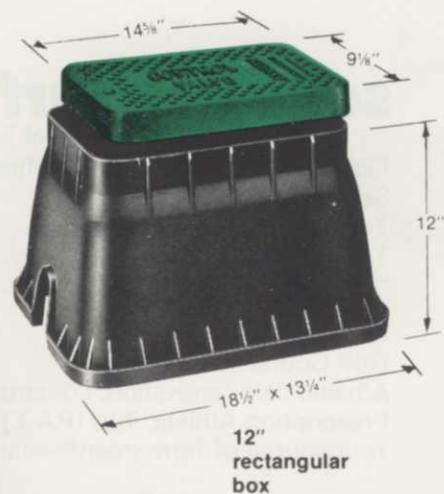
If you scored 50 points or more, ask yourself a question before you take on one more project: Is it worth dying for?

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Pesticides and Protective Clothing

by MARJORIE A. SOHN Associate Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign *Reprinted from The Bull Sheet*

Exposing your skin to some pesticides presents a health hazard and clothing provides a vital protective barrier against the exposure.

Pesticide applicators can purchase chemical-resistant apparel, but recent surveys indicate the majority of pesticide users wear traditional work clothing when mixing, handling, and applying pesticides. They prefer ordinary work clothing because it is more comfortable, less expensive and easily available. They also doubt the need for protective clothing.

A non-punctured-type Tyvek is one of the disposable chemical-resistant garments on the market. It is made from spun-bonded olefin, a non-woven fabric that provides an effective barrier to many types of chemicals. Although you usually must dispose of non-woven garments after one use, Tyvek garments withstand up to four launderings. However, if your clothing is contaminated with a concentrated chemical, dispose of it rather than trying to clean it because of safety considerations.

Fabric studies

Testing is under way on Gore-Tex fabric to determine its ability to provide protection from pesticides. Gore-Tex is a microporous membrane that is laminated between a shell fabric and a fabric lining. As a result, Gore-Tex allows perspiration to pass through the fabric, but it keeps liquid from entering the outside of the garment and contacting the skin.

A North Central Region research project focused on the influence of the following characteristics in creating a protective barrier:

- Fiber content,
- Fabric construction,
- Functional finishes, and
- Laundering methods.

Choosing clothing

Absorbency and wicking are important considerations in determining chemical resistance. Tests conducted on cotton, polyester/cotton blends, polyester, nylon, acrylic and spun-bonded olefin fabrics yielded these results:

- Pure cotton fabric exhibits the highest rate of absorbency, which means it absorbs a large amount of pesticide solution. However, less pesticide

solution travels to under-clothing or skin.

- Cotton/polyester blends exhibited moderate absorbency and wicking.

• Lightweight fabric (broadcloth) demonstrated lower absorbency than poplin or twill in tests, but it also exhibited very rapid wicking. Broadcloth's tight weave appears to transport pesticide solution more rapidly and in greater quantities to under-clothing or skin.

• Synthetic fiber -- acrylic, nylon and polyester -- had low absorbency, but they had the highest wicking levels. Compared to other fabrics, the pesticide solution flowed rapidly from the garment to underclothing or skin.

• Spun-bonded olefin fabric showed the lowest rate of absorbency and wicking of the fabrics tested. It provides an excellent barrier against pesticide penetration and it offers extra protection when you wear it over work clothes.

• Clothing with a consumer-applied fluorocarbon soil-repellent finish gives the same protection as spun-bonded olefin, but it is more comfortable to wear. 🍏



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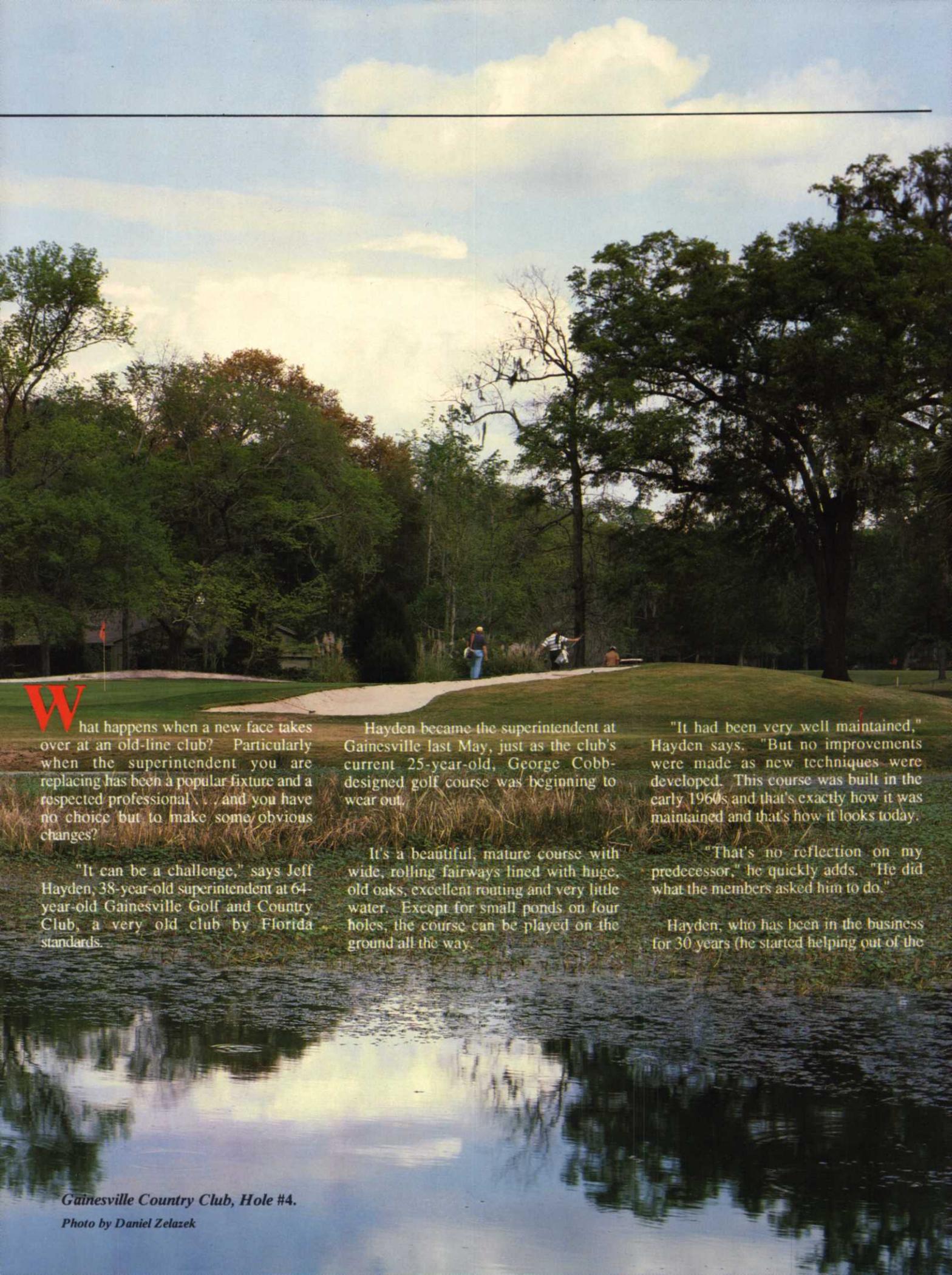


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Gainesville Country Club

by LARRY KIEFFER





What happens when a new face takes over at an old-line club? Particularly when the superintendent you are replacing has been a popular fixture and a respected professional... and you have no choice but to make some obvious changes?

"It can be a challenge," says Jeff Hayden, 38-year-old superintendent at 64-year-old Gainesville Golf and Country Club, a very old club by Florida standards.

Hayden became the superintendent at Gainesville last May, just as the club's current 25-year-old, George Cobb-designed golf course was beginning to wear out.

It's a beautiful, mature course with wide, rolling fairways lined with huge, old oaks, excellent routing and very little water. Except for small ponds on four holes, the course can be played on the ground all the way.

"It had been very well maintained," Hayden says. "But no improvements were made as new techniques were developed. This course was built in the early 1960s and that's exactly how it was maintained and that's how it looks today.

"That's no reflection on my predecessor," he quickly adds. "He did what the members asked him to do."

Hayden, who has been in the business for 30 years (he started helping out of the

Gainesville Country Club, Hole #4.

Photo by Daniel Zelazek

family-run golf course in Michigan at age 8), is reluctant to talk about problems of any kind.

Ask him about drought, freezes, ball marks or nematodes and he is likely to preface his answer with the comment, "Let's see how we can phrase this in a positive light . . ."

Ask him about political problems and he doesn't have any.

"I work for the members," Hayden says. "If I don't make sure that my first priority is to make those members happy, then I'm not doing my job. My most important concern is to be concerned about the members' priorities, not mine.

Ask him about drainage and he'll concede there is a slight challenge.

"We have to be careful how we phrase this," Hayden says. "I wouldn't want to create the impression that the course is wet all the time.

And he's right. Gainesville G&CC is an excellent private golf course that

supports more than 35,000 rounds a year from 500 members who are quite proud of their facility. Discussion of problems should be put into that perspective: even the finest hand-crafted automobile needs overhauling from time to time.

Still, no matter how it is phrased, Gainesville G&CC has a drainage problem. Particularly in summer, the course occasionally must be closed because of wet conditions. Closing the course even one day is more than the members would like.

Because the course is built on clay and water can't percolate directly into the underground aquifer, surface runoff must be directed into a lake bordering the property. That lake, in turn, overflows into Payne's Prairie, the huge wetland south of Gainesville that once was Florida's second-largest lake.

Some of the water won't move fast enough and, from some places, it won't move at all.

One problem is the greens and tees; another is the design and construction of the system of ponds, swales and ditches

that is supposed to carry the water off the property.

"The greens are in pretty good shape for 25-year-old greens built the way they were," Hayden says, "but they do need renovation."

"I wouldn't be surprised if they weren't just a bunch of dirt piled up," say Chuck Brasington, Gainesville G&CC head professional for the past 22 years.

Construction is not quite that unsophisticated, but Hayden has found that the drain tiles on at least one green simply end beneath the surface, about 30 yards from the green. The water had no place to go except to work its way up through the sod, creating a quagmire.

He solved the problem temporarily by cutting a small ditch from tile's end to the nearest swale.

"It's amazing how quickly Jeff won over the membership just by doing little things," says member John Hoce.

"Won over" might be too strong a word. Still, Hayden's predecessor had

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been very popular, particularly with the older members. When he left to tackle new challenges, his successor -- no matter who he was -- was going to have a tough time filling his shoes.

The situation was aggravated by the increasing influence of a younger generation of members who were not particularly happy with 1960s-style golf. So long as they had to replace their superintendent, they wanted the maintenance level upgraded to the 1990s at the same time.

"I'm sure he could have done it," say Hayden, speaking of his predecessor. "It's just that they never asked him to."

But if ever there were a superintendent prepared to step into that potentially hazardous political situation, it was Jeffrey Paul Hayden, a man with an impeccable course-management pedigree, outstanding credentials . . . and the added advantage of having served many of the members at a different facility a decade earlier.

Jeffrey is the son of John Hayden, famed superintendent of Augusta National GC. It was he who teased the magnolias into bloom at just the right time as the Masters Tournament developed into golf's biggest television show in the 1970s.

In the late '50s, however, the senior Hayden leased the nine-hole Diamond Lake Golf Course in Cassopolis, Mich.

"specifically because he thought teaching his children how to run a golf course was the best way to bring them up. He leased it and my sister and I worked it."

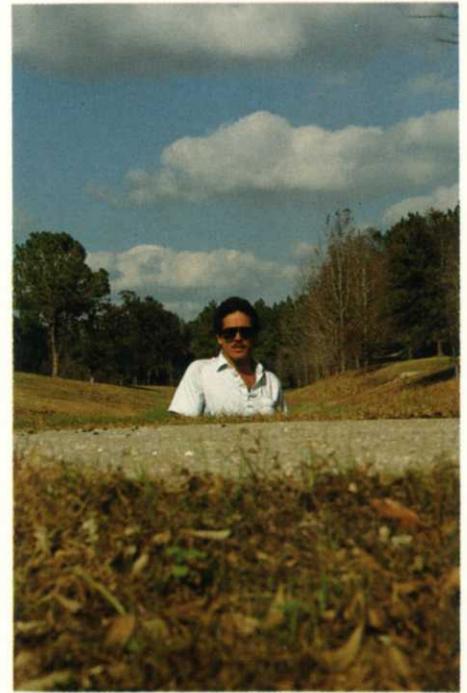
By the time he was 16, young Jeff "was pretty much running it, although you couldn't have called me the superintendent or the manager or anything like that."

He entered the local community college, dropped out and got drafted, serving three years in the U.S. Army, including a stint in Vietnam.

When he got out in 1972, he went to work as a laborer at Inverrary CC in Lauderhill. His stay was brief, however, because his dad found room for him at August National as an irrigation technician.

While at Augusta, Hayden met Dr. Gene Nutter, then head of the school of golf course operations at Lake City Community College. He entered Lake City in the fall of 1972 and, less than two years later, found himself superintendent at Beau Clerc TGC in Jacksonville while still finishing up his coursework for his associate of science in golf course operations.

"Dr. Nutter wasn't exactly thrilled about the situation, but he also recognized that it was too good an opportunity to pass up," Hayden says. "There are a lot of us today who owe a lot to that man."



Jeff Hayden, superintendent.

In 1977, Hayden accepted the challenge of growing in the golf course for a new private club to be built north of Gainesville, Turkey Creek. He stayed five years before moving on to ultra-posh and private Avila G&CC in Tampa.

"After five years at Avila, I decided that I needed to test some other waters and, if I was ever going to do it, that was the time," Hayden says. He became turf equipment sales manager in Florida for Lesco, Inc. in 1987.

SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE

NAME: Jeffrey Paul Hayden

AGE: 38

EXPERIENCE:

Diamond Lake GC, Cassopolis, Mich. (9 holes, public) 1958-68; began as helper at family-leased golf course at age 8, was "pretty much running things" from age 16-18. Beau Clerc GC, Jacksonville (18, semi-private), superintendent 1974-77. Turkey Creek G&CC, Alachua (18, private), superintendent 1977-82. Avila CC, Tampa (18, private), superintendent 1982-87. Lesco Co. (turf maintenance

equipment), Tampa, Florida sales manager 1987-88. Gainesville G&CC, superintendent, 1988 - .

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Golf course, grounds maintenance and landscaping. Total staff of 9 full time and 5 part time.

PERSONAL:

Married (Sandra 1979) with one stepdaughter (Stephanie 16) and one son (Benjamin 8); hobbies are golf (12 handicap) and bass fishing.

EDUCATION:

Associate of Science, Golf Course Operations, Lake City Community College, 1974.

PROFESSIONAL:

Member of GCSAA, director Florida Turfgrass Association; member and past president of North Florida GCSA.

PHILOSOPHY:

You've got to remember that the only reason you have this great job is because those members have paid a lot of money to play golf. No matter who you report to, ultimately the members are your boss. 🍏



Photo by Larry Kieffer
 Jeff Hayden, left, and Chuck Brasington, head professional, discuss problems with spike marks on the green.

Interestingly enough, his assistant at Turkey Creek and successor at Avila was none other than current FGCSA President Cecil Johnston.

And it didn't take Hayden long to return to the profession of his breeding.

"I'm sure it was easier for me to come here than it would have been for almost anyone else because a lot of the members here were members at Turkey Creek when I was there. They knew what they were getting, and if they wanted me, well, I figured the situation would work out."

Hayden is the fourth member of the greens committee, which meets officially once every six weeks. He confers informally with one or both of the co-chairmen, John Darr and Bill Koons, at least once a week.

Gainesville G&CC has no general manager. Hayden, Brasington and Club Manager Betty Sauls each works directly

for a committee of members who serve at the pleasure of the club's president and board of directors. The three managers meet "at least to chat" two or three times a week.

"We are on the same team," Hayden says. "If we don't communicate, we won't know the signals."

The team concept is the way Hayden approaches management. He notes proudly that he had no turnover when he took over as superintendent "except for one person who was going to leave anyway."

"One of the first things I did was have a meeting with everybody and explain that we had to work as a team," he says. "I told them that I was the quarterback, but the quarterback can't do it without linemen, running backs, receivers and a defensive team. And they can't do it without the quarterback."

Hayden met with each of his full-time employees (now nine) and part-timers

GAINESVILLE GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

FACTS & FIGURES

LOCATION:

Southwest of Gainesville at southwest corner of I-75 and SR121 intersection.

DEVELOPER:

Members

MANAGEMENT:

Member-owned. Betty Saula, club manager; Chuck Brasington, head professional; Jeff Hayden, superintendent. Each works for a separate committee of members; greens committee co-chairmen are John Darr and Bill Koons.

SIZE & SCOPE:

Golf course occupies 190 acres. Single-family housing surrounding the golf course is not connected with club membership.

PLAYING POLICIES:

Strictly private for 500 members and occasional guests; open all year, 35,000-plus rounds per year. Annual Gator Pro-Am is only outside event.

COURSE ARCHITECT:

George Cobb

CONTRACTORS:

Unknown

TERRAIN:

Rolling to moderately hilly.

SOIL:

Clay

HISTORY:

Club founded in 1924, moved to current site in 1962. Golf course completed in spring of 1963. No remodeling or renovation since.

COURSE LENGTH:

5303 (rating 69.5, Slope 110) to 6800 (rating 72.1, Slope 120) yards.

TEES:

Most holes have two tee boxes, each with two sets of markers. Turf: Ormond bermudagrass cut to 3/8 inch, overseeded in winter with rye.