

# Canada's best: 'Just giving back to industry' he loves

By Peter Blais

Paul Dermott recalls the dilemma facing him as the oldest of four boys growing up on the family farm in Orangeville, Ontario.

"There just wasn't room for me on the farm. Fortunately, I fell in love with the golf business," recalled the 1991 Canadian Superintendent of the Year.

Agriculture's loss has been the golf industry's gain, according to those in the golf business.

"At the age of 46, we believe Paul has done more to advance our profession than many individuals do in a lifetime," said Mark Hagen, president of the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association, which nominated its former president for the award.

Dermott said he is very proud at receiving the 11th Annual Superintendent of the Year Award, co-sponsored by the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association and SCORE Magazine. SCORE will present the trophy at an April awards banquet in Toronto, where it will recognize golfers and other industry professionals as well.

"I was very honored to win it," recalled last year's winner, David Sullivan of Capilano Golf & Country Club in Vancouver, who was also a member of the five-man Superintendent-of-the-Year selection committee.

"There's nothing better than being recognized by your peers. I brought my mother and aunt down from New Brunswick for the dinner. It was a great thrill for all of us."

"Paul is an exceptional superintendent. He's done so much to help the various industry associations and is being recognized for the extra he does. It's an honor he definitely deserves."

Dermott's resume is impressive. In addition to working his way up to head superintendent at Toronto's prestigious Oakdale Golf & Country Club, he was a founding member of the Ontario Turfgrass Research Foundation; helped gain a provincial turfgrass extension specialist through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food; served on many Golf Course Superintendents Association

of America committees; chairs the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association pension committee; and has written extensively for local, regional and national trade association publications.

He is also chairman of the first Ontario Turfgrass Symposium scheduled for January at the University of Guelph, about 45 miles west of Toronto. More than 100 exhibitors are expected to sign up for the conference that will bring together five allied associations from the golf, sports, parks and cemetery industries.

"Why do I get so involved? The industry has been so good to me, I want to give something back. I want to see the profession do well," Dermott said.

A summer job on Orangeville's Chinguacousy Country Club grounds crew between semesters at the University of Guelph marked Dermott's first exposure to course maintenance. The head superintendent was Rene Mulyaert, now a course architect. Mulyaert has designed many courses, primarily in Ontario.

After graduating with an associate's degree in animal husbandry (Guelph had no turfgrass program) in 1965, Dermott enrolled in Pennsylvania State University's turfgrass management program, receiving his degree in 1967.

He returned to Chinguacousy, eventually replacing Mulyaert as head superintendent. He assisted his mentor in constructing an additional nine at Chinguacousy and helped build several other of Mulyaert's courses.

"Rene gave me a lot of leeway as his assistant. He's very creative. He builds good courses that can be maintained at a minimal cost," Dermott said.

Dermott moved on to Toronto's Islington Golf Club in 1972. The course needed major renovation. Dermott dove in and had the course in peak condition by the 1973 Ontario Open. The favorable reviews from players and fellow superintendents was a real confidence builder.

Dermott credited a "very capable" staff for the turnaround at Islington. One of his major strengths, Dermott said, is his ability to attract



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Oakdale is a very prestigious course in golf-crazed Toronto, the third busiest city in the world in terms of rounds played per capita. Renowned Canadian architect Stanley Thompson designed the first 18 in 1926. Clinton Robinson added nine more in 1957.

But the course needed extensive work when Dermott came aboard. His crew installed a new drainage system to move water off Oakdale's heavy soils. A recently installed irrigation system functioned poorly, but Dermott brought it up to snuff.

Dermott strives to keep the course in tournament condition, although Oakdale hosts few tournaments other than a yearly Ontario Better Ball Tourney for the province's top amateur players.

Dermott tries to play at least once a week as part of a regular group of four local superintendents, who rotate between each other's courses. He also jogs and plays in an adult hockey league.

"The thing I admire most about Paul is his tenacity for making the O.T.R.F. a success when others might have given up and especially his tenacity on the golf course and the hockey rink," said Blake McMaster, head superintendent at Brampton (Ontario) Golf Club.

Borrowing a hockey term, Dermott describes himself as a grinder. "When I get onto something, I hang in there and see it through to completion," he said. "That's the way I approached the Ontario Turfgrass Research Foundation. It's a charitable organization supporting turfgrass research.

"We convinced the University of Guelph to start the Guelph Turfgrass Institute three years ago. The O.T.R.F. provides the funding, the university the professors and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food the land. We've raised about \$1.5 million and broken ground for a new building."

train and return to the marketplace expertly-trained assistants who eventually become head superintendents at other courses.

Dermott University graduates include Tom Charters of Weston Golf Club in Toronto; Jim Molenhius of King Valley Golf Club in Aurora; Doug Hoskins, formerly of National Golf Club in Woodford; Ted Tom of Upland Golf Club in Toronto; and Don Crymble of IBM Golf Club in Toronto.

"I enjoy seeing my assistants progress and do well as individuals," Dermott said. "Young people keep you on your toes. They don't know there are things you can't do, so they force you to challenge things."

Dermott's oldest son, Vincent, is head superintendent at nearby Markland Woods Golf Club, although he never worked for his father. His other son, Steve, is Vincent's mechanic at Markland. Daughter Lori Ann, a student at Trent University, has worked summers for Vince.

Dermott said he was very happy at Islington when the Oakdale job opened up in 1977. A friend told him he ought to apply and he did so at the last moment.

"Apparently they (greens committee members) were waiting for it," he said.

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