

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Caution in Asia

Some developers believe golf course construction may outpace demand 6

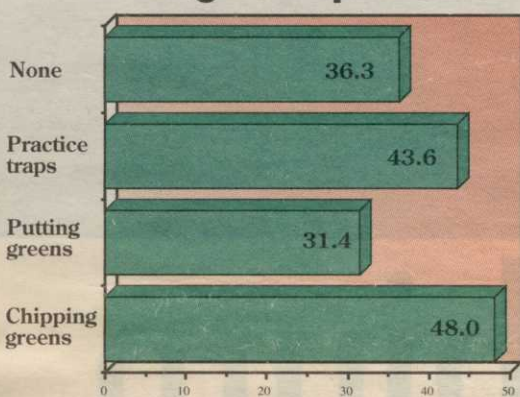
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Maryland superintendent finds invisible fencing keeps carts and their drivers in line 54

A range of options



Many U.S. practice facilities offer chipping and putting greens and practice traps. This graph shows the percentages of surveyed ranges that offer these services. Ranges that operate at or close to a year-round basis are more likely to offer practice areas.

Source: National Golf Foundation

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Grads facing uncertain future

By Peter Blais

Turf school graduates are having more trouble finding entry-level jobs as assistant superintendents than they did a year ago, according to college officials.

"We usually graduate 45 to 50 students," said Professor Richard Cooper, coordinator of the University of Massachusetts two-year turf management program.

"Last year was the first time they weren't all able to get jobs. This year it's been even worse. It's taking a lot more work to find positions."

Cooper blames a weak economy, particularly in the Northeast, for the bleak job

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Cat strike leaves mark on industry

By Hal Phillips

PEORIA, ILL. — Wadsworth Construction Co. held a unique perspective on the year's most visible labor dispute, in terms of industry and geography.

Located in Plainfield, Ill., Wadsworth observed the five-month strike at nearby Caterpillar Inc. from close range.

"We've got Cat plants on both sides of us, in Aurora and Joliet," said Paul Eldredge, president of Wadsworth. Before the April 15 settlement, Eldredge indicated he felt Caterpillar was in good position to wait out its discontented work-

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Gen Morita wants all golf construction halted, including Perry Dye's Royal Hawaiian (above).

Japanese course basher sets sights on Hawaii

By Peter Blais

His goal is nothing short of stopping all golf course development, period. And Hawaii is his latest target.

"It's not possible to build a good golf course," said Gen Morita of the The Global Network for Anti-Golf Course Action. "You can't put something like that on 150 acres and expect it to not hurt the environment, unless you stick it in the middle of the desert. But if you build it in the usual way, it's just not possible."

Before developers dismiss the 44-year-old Japanese activist as just another fly in

the ointment, they ought to consider his record.

Morita claims to have had a hand in stopping construction of 280 Japanese courses through his work with the Japan National Network Against Resort and Golf Course Development. Since 1988, the group has helped obtain moratoriums against new development in 10 of Japan's 46 prefectures.

With Japanese corporations financing many of Hawaii's new courses, Morita turned his attention to the 50th state last

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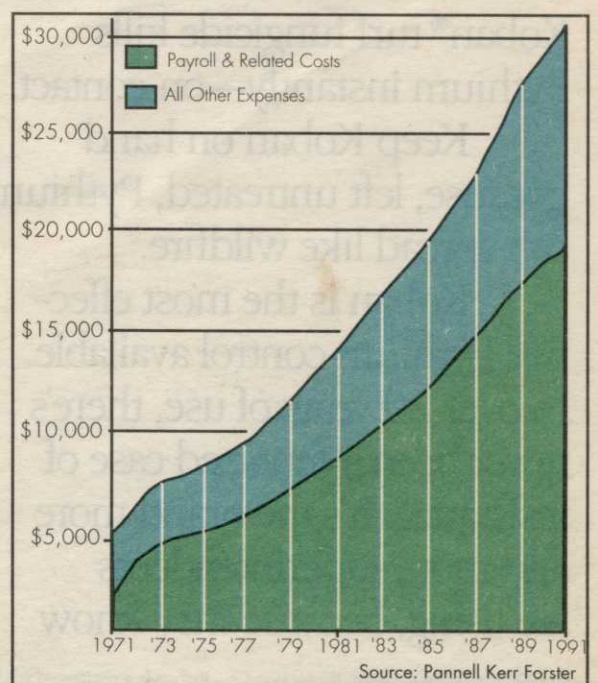
Maintenance costs continue upward spiral

From Staff Reports

Higher payroll expenses caused country club maintenance costs to jump almost 10 percent last year, despite efforts to cut back on repairs and other costs.

Average payroll climbed 10 percent (to \$15,888 per hole) while payroll taxes and benefits rose 16.8 percent (to \$3,610 per hole) at 250 private U.S. country clubs surveyed by the accounting firm of Pannell Kerr Forster in its 1992 Clubs in Town & Country report.

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Source: Pannell Kerr Forster

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Job market for this year's graduates remains depressed

Continued from page 1

picture. Golf clubs are feeling the financial pinch and can't offer the attractive salary and benefit packages they have in the past to lure superintendents and assistant superintendents from other clubs. Consequently, fewer assistant superintendent posts are opening up.

"You used to see the merry-go-round of positions. Superintendents left for better jobs. Assistants took their place and graduates moved into the assistant jobs. That's not happening anymore. Clubs aren't offering the attractive packages to cause movement. When times are bad, people tend to stay where they are," the UMass professor said.

While not quite as depressed as the Northeast, the Southeast is also experiencing hard times.

"The superintendent market is a little soft," said John Piersol, chairman of the Division of Golf Course Operations at Lake City (Fla.) Community College. "We've placed all of our graduates for the past 25 years. We'll do the same this year, although they won't be able to be so picky."

"Some of them will end up taking jobs as spray technicians, irrigation installers or assistant superintendents at golf courses that are far from their first choice. That's a lot different than the late 1980s when there were two to four jobs for every graduate."

The economy has also soured the job outlook in Canada. Openings are off 10 to 15 percent for University of Guelph (Ont.) graduates, according to Jack Eggens, a horticulture professor at the country's premier turf school. Salaries are also down.

"We've got 10 students going out as assistants in the \$27,000 to \$34,000 (Canadian) range. Three years ago some were starting at \$40,000," he said.

Despite the downturn, the market for superintendents is "dam good," compared to students entering other fields, Eggens said. Agricultural openings are down 40 to 45 percent and engineering 60 to 70 percent, he added.

And small pockets of prosperity do exist. Richard Moore, an instructor with the landscape turf program at Spokane (Wash.) Community College, said the eastern Washington job market is "still quite good. We graduate six to 15, two-year students annually. About a third go to work at golf courses."

"We haven't seen any dropoff, yet. The local economy is pretty diverse and generally very good. We haven't seen the bad times they have elsewhere."

Turf schools are still feeling the effects of the golf boom. Many schools are reporting record enrollments at a time when the job market is starting to level off at pre-boom levels.

"We have larger numbers and better qualified students coming in than ever before," said the University of Guelph's Eggens.

More graduates and fewer jobs

could mean an assistant superintendent glut for the next few years.

Concerned about a potential oversupply of course managers, several Florida superintendent association chapters in 1990 conducted surveys of their members, according to Kevin Downing, head superintendent at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart.

With the average superintendent ranging in age from 34 to 38, and planning to stay in the business another 20 to 30 years, there just weren't enough new course open-

ings and retirements to justify the number of projected turf school graduates, Downing said.

The superintendent associations worked with Lake City to reduce its enrollment. The northern Florida school is a major supplier of graduates to the Florida assistant superintendent market and had more than 100 students in the golf course operations program at the time, Downing said.

In response to golf boom predictions, Lake City raised its admission limits to 60 new students per

year in the late 1980s, Piersol said. Many bad projects withered and died because of the savings and loan crisis. With the slowdown in construction, the school has pared back its new enrollments to 45 to 50 annually.

"Most people feel we're going to come out of this sluggish economy in 1992 and go back to more normal times," the Lake City educator said. "In the late 1980s, you had assistant superintendents six months out of school being offered head superintendent jobs at new courses."

"That's backed off. Students should expect to be assistants for five to six years. The head jobs will eventually open up for the good people."

Attracted by the relative health of the golf industry, some schools are considering adding new turf schools, Piersol said.

"This is the worst time for a new school to come in," he said. "I don't know if these schools are doing their research properly. There are almost too many people who want to be golf course superintendents now. They need to look at other possibilities."

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