

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## INSIDE

### Lemons & Lemonade

Nicklaus Design has undertaken the first golf development on a former Superfund site ..... 5

### In Capable Hands

The superintendent at St. Andrews is handling renovations in preparation for the 1995 British Open ..... 13

### The Public Arena

Corporate memberships at upscale daily-fee courses are proving beneficial to both parties ..... 62



#### MASTER GREENKEEPER

Terry Buchen (right) has earned Master Greenkeeper status, as bestowed by the Right Honourable Lord Griffiths MC (left), captain of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews. Buchen is one of only three American superintendents to be so honored. See story on page 20.

#### COURSE MAINTENANCE

Focus on Palmer, Canada's super of the year ..... 14  
Off The Record: Thatch can useful safeguard ..... 17  
Resodding for play in 48 hours — Honestly ..... 18

#### COURSE DEVELOPMENT

New GCBA head Kirchdorfer, on the record ..... 37  
Schreiner ventures into Chinese market ..... 41  
Connor, Golfforms saving Ross courses on disk ..... 43

#### COURSE MANAGEMENT

Cobblestone carves a niche in Sun Belt ..... 47  
American Links: Consultants, start to finish ..... 47  
Marketing Idea: Client questionnaires ..... 51

#### SUPPLIER BUSINESS

Bunton, Kubota Canada strike dealership deal ..... 53  
ASPA members to gather in Newport ..... 54  
What's new in the marketplace? ..... 56,58



#### HOW TO SPEAK A THOUSAND WORDS

The Wade Hampton Club in Cashiers, N.C., never looked so good, thanks to photographer Mike Klemme. Klemme and colleague Tony Roberts talk about how to prepare a course for photography, and how to market a course with pictures. See pages 22 & 47.

## Turf grads face crowded job market

By PETER BLAIS

The job market for turf school graduates shows few signs of improving while the number of wannabe superintendents continues to grow, according to educators and practitioners.

"It's been noticeably slower the past few years," said University of Massachusetts Professor Richard Cooper.

"During most of the 1980s, we'd graduate 40 to 50 students every year and all would find jobs as assistant superintendents. Now about half find assistant jobs, a quarter are able to find work on golf course maintenance crews and the rest end up doing something else."

The situation is a little better in the South. Lake City (Fla.) College Profes-

Continued on page 26

## Wadsworth Golf: The training ground for aspiring architects

By MARK LESLIE

When project director Glen Doutrich told Craig Schreiner to oversee finished grading of the irrigation heads for an upcoming walk-through of the Fazio Course at Barton Creek in Austin, Texas, the young apprentice said, "Yes, the owners will probably get real touchy about that." Doutrich responded: "I'm not worried about the owners. We far exceed their expectations. The walk-through you've got to watch for is Mr. Wadsworth's."

The Wadsworth Way, Schreiner calls it. It refers to Brent Wadsworth. It defines how he runs his Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. And it may explain why that nationwide firm has become the

Continued on page 38

## Openings maintain torrid pace

A third straight year of 350-plus courses

By HAL PHILLIPS

A whopping 358 golf courses opened for play during 1993, as public-access development continued to dominate a market that — despite a bevy of cool-headed forecasts — has sustained its considerable momentum.

According to a National Golf Foundation (NGF) report, a full 81 percent of those courses unveiled last year were either daily fee or municipal. Of the 14,639 courses now operating in the United States, 66.6 percent are public-access.

According to Rick Norton, vice president of the NGF, private course development is more adversely affected by recession, whereas public golf is more often aimed at a particular market segment.

"I think golf is being viewed more and more as a business," said Norton. "It was a very good year in 1993, and I think it shows courses are being built for the market. They're more

Continued on page 3

## Study: Labor trouble on horizon for private clubs

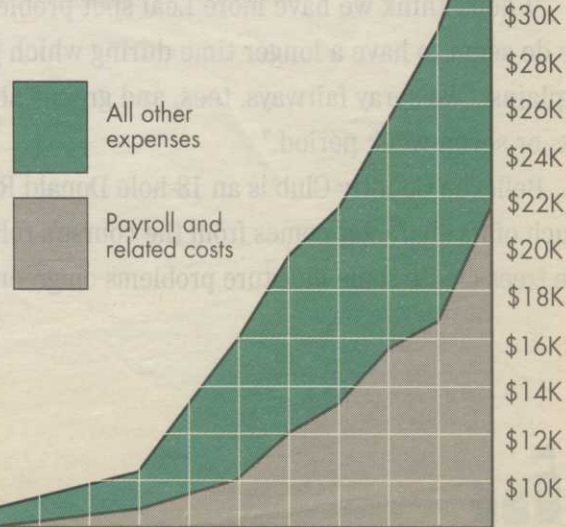
By PETER BLAIS

Increasing labor costs, declining membership and less money available for capital improvements are among the disturbing findings in an annual report on the health of private country clubs.

From 1972-82, private golf course maintenance personnel were paid less than the average income paid workers in that general labor pool. Since then, however, course employees have been and continue to be paid more than the pool average, according to Kevin Reilly, national tax director for the international accounting firm Pannell Kerr

Continued on page 48

### Average Annual Cost Per Hole



Source: Pannell Kerr Forster

# Job market tightens up

Continued from page 1

sor John Piersol said the employment outlook for this spring's graduates will be about the same as a year ago.

"It's a reasonable job market, but not a boom like we had in the 1980s," said the director of the school's golf course operations program. "We're back to more normal times."

Part of the problem is too many students. In response to a shortage of superintendents in the 1980s, some colleges beefed up programs while others added new ones.

Pushed by the large number of laid-off, high-tech workers returning to school to develop new careers, UMass saw the number of turf students in its two- and four-year programs nearly double from 75 in 1985 to 140 in 1994, according to Cooper.

Penn State's Stephen Edkin, 35, is among the growing legion of returning students. Edkin earned a four-year degree in finance in the early 1980s. He was a banker for eight years before deciding to change careers. He played golf as a

youth and worked as an assistant pro for two years after high school.

"I thought about becoming a superintendent after high school," Edkin recalled. "But I didn't have a good role model for the profession. So I went into banking. But banking changed a lot in recent years and I needed something else. I did a lot of research and decided this is what I wanted to do."

Edkin will graduate this spring with a four-year degree in turfgrass management. He hopes to land an assistant job in the Northeast.

The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association is concerned enough about the

growing number of graduates that President Paul Crawford of Palm Beach Country Club recently assigned Joel Jackson of Orlando's Walt Disney complex to chair a long-range planning committee to look into the supply-and-demand aspects of the job market.

"Recently in Palm Beach County, 75 qualified, educated superintendents applied for one job opening," Crawford wrote in *The Florida Green*. "Given our climate, I don't think the situation is going to get better."

Mark Kuhns, head superintendent at suburban Pittsburgh's Oakmont Country

Club, site of this summer's U.S. Open, agrees colleges may be grooming too many turf students. But, he adds, many experienced superintendents believe recent graduates are passing over lower-paying entry jobs that could earn them valuable experience in the unrealistic hope of landing a high-paying first position.

"There are a lot of jobs for hard workers who are flexible and up on new technology," Kuhns said. "But they have to get experience."

One of the best ways is through internships. Kuhns, a Penn State graduate, estimates 14 to 15 interns will have passed through Oakmont and helped prepare the course for the U.S. Open.

"If you've interned or worked at a big-name club, the possibility of moving up is just that much better. And it's a good thing to be able to put on the resume — helping prepare for the U.S. Open at Oakmont," Kuhns said.

Recent graduates should consider alternatives to assistant superintendent positions for their first job, Piersol recommended.

"Most of the jobs we hear about are still for assistant superintendents," he said. "But we're also hearing about more irrigation and spray technician openings."

In Florida, those positions generally pay \$18,000 to \$20,000 annually, as opposed to the \$20,000 to \$25,000 assistants usually earn, Piersol said. While lower salaries may make these jobs less attractive, they may be the best way to get experience, he added.

There is also a shortage of qualified golf course mechanics, Piersol said. Lake City offers a one-year certificate for course mechanics. Pay generally ranges from \$7.50 to \$10 hourly, with abundant overtime often available.

"We'll graduate just seven mechanic students this year. We'd like to get that figure up to 25 to 30. I could place 100 graduates right now," Piersol said.

Texas A&M University's Karen Lodico is a returning student considering alternative turf career. Lodico graduated in the early 1980s with a marketing degree that served her well in the hotel and travel industry.

"But I wasn't happy," said Lodico, who will earn a turfgrass management degree this spring. "I was more geared toward science. I'd like to get a job in turfgrass sales or irrigation."

Fellow Aggies Chris Cunningham, 24, and Todd Martin, 23, are more-traditional turf students but with non-traditional goals.

Cunningham will graduate in May with a double major in marketing and turfgrass management and aspirations for a career in chemical sales. "I'm hoping the two majors will make me more marketable," he said.

Martin will receive his bachelors degree in agronomy this spring, but plans to immediately start graduate school with an eye toward becoming a turf management consultant. "I'm pretty optimistic about the job market," he said.

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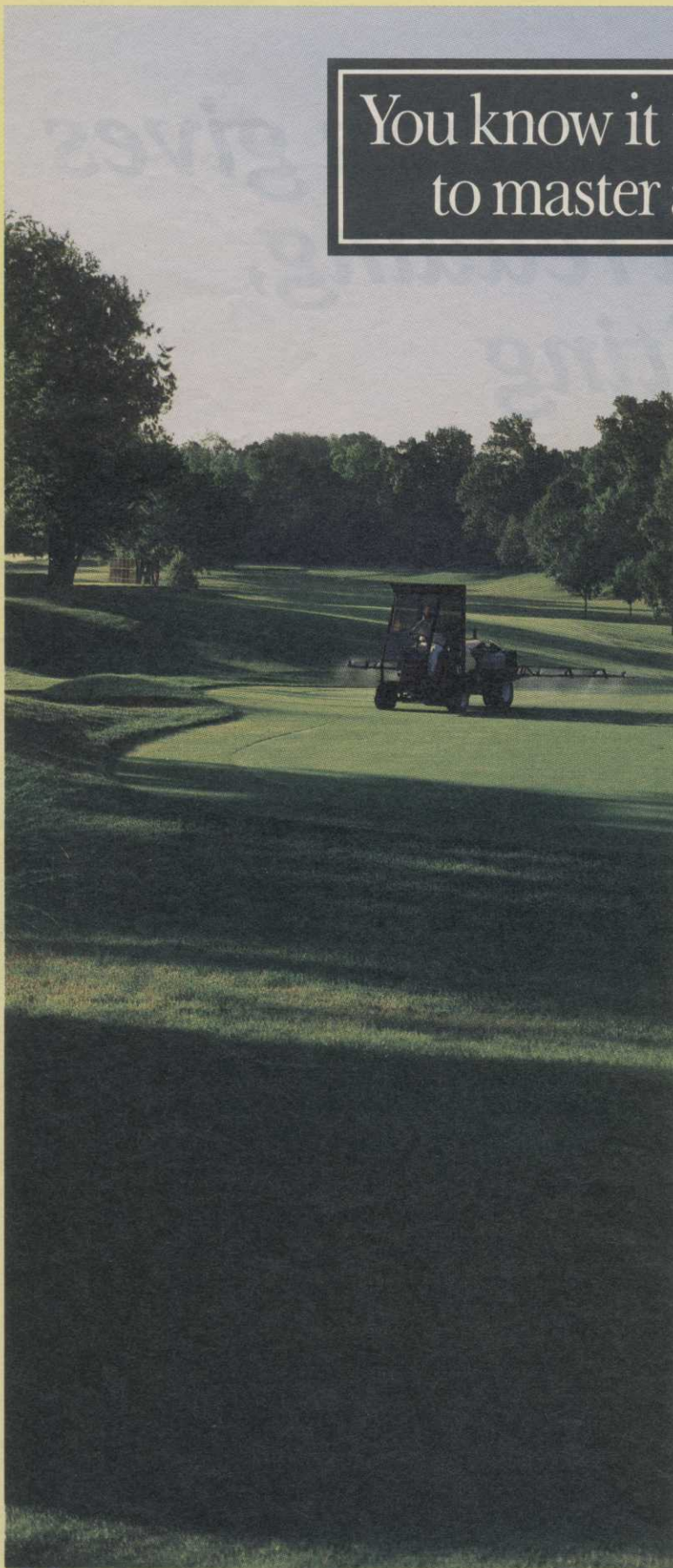
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