

# 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

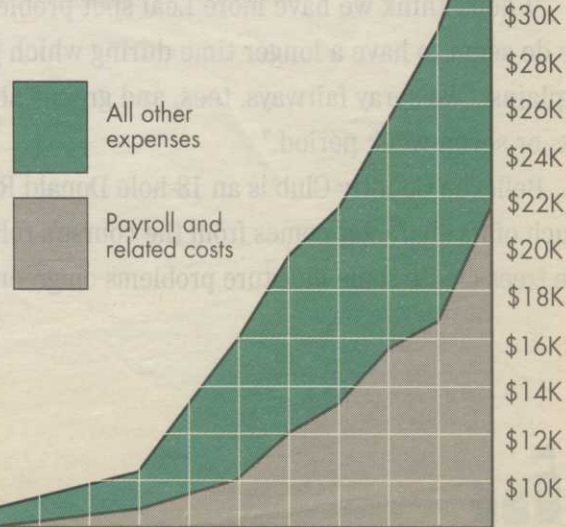
By PETER BLAIS

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

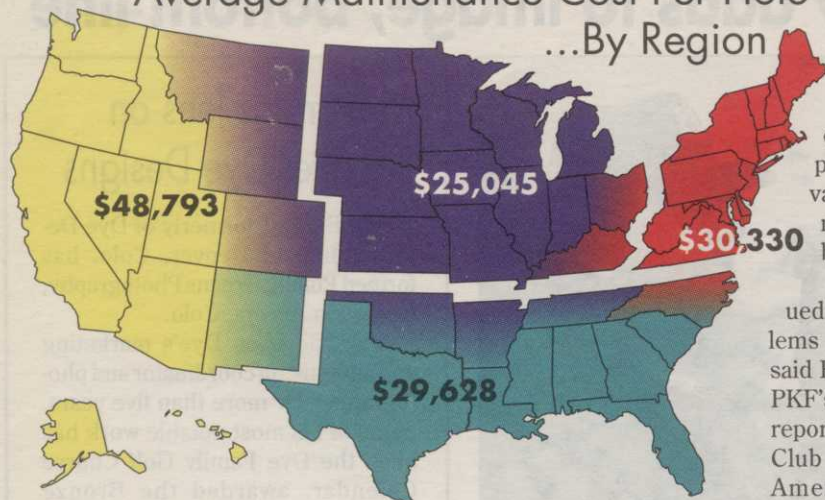
Continued on page 48

### Average Annual Cost Per Hole



Source: Pannell Kerr Forster



Average Maintenance Cost Per Hole  
...By Region

## PKF report paints bleak picture for private clubs

Continued from page 1  
Forster Worldwide.

While labor and other course maintenance expenses were going up, private club memberships (the main income source) have been going down.

"It's a trend that, if continued unchecked, will cause problems for clubs down the road," said Reilly, whose firm compiles PKF's Clubs in Town & Country report in cooperation with the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA). During

CMAA's recent annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, Reilly noted two causes for escalating personnel costs — the need for increasingly skilled labor to perform course maintenance operations and the tendency for private club workers to remain at their jobs for long periods with attendant wage increases.

Overall course maintenance costs rose 4.1 percent and net golf expenses (including golf shop, caddie and committee expenses) 2.2 percent in 1992 at the 240 clubs PKF surveyed. The average maintenance cost per hole nationwide

was \$34,671. Labor was the major expense with payroll, payroll taxes and employee benefits accounting for \$20,851 or about 60.1 percent of the total maintenance budget.

Other per-hole maintenance expenses included course supplies and contracts, \$7,570 or 21.8 percent; repairs to equipment, course buildings, water and drainage systems, \$3,240 or 9.3 percent; and all other expenses, \$3,010 or 8.7 percent.

On a regional basis, the Far West was the most expensive area for course maintenance at \$48,793 per hole. That was followed by the East, \$30,330, South, \$29,628 and Midwest, \$25,045.

The East had the largest per-hole maintenance increase, up 7 percent. The other three regions experienced increases below the 4.1 percent national average.

And what about income?

Nationwide, country club membership dropped 0.3 percent in 1992. The Midwest felt the biggest decrease, 0.9 percent, followed by the South, 0.7 percent, and East, 0.3 percent. The Far West saw the only increase, 0.2 percent.

"The disturbing news is that membership is static or even declining, prior to the effect the nondeductibility of dues may have on membership...," the report states. "The economy, while improving, has not rebounded with vigor. Clubs will continue to fight this decline with little help from outside forces."

Clubs that believe they had a cushion against the recession in the form of membership waiting lists might want to re-evaluate their position in light of lean economic times, Reilly advised.

"You should consider checking to see if that list is still good," he suggested. "If you're not doing it now, consider charging something to those wanting to be put on the waiting list. The list should remain more accurate that way."

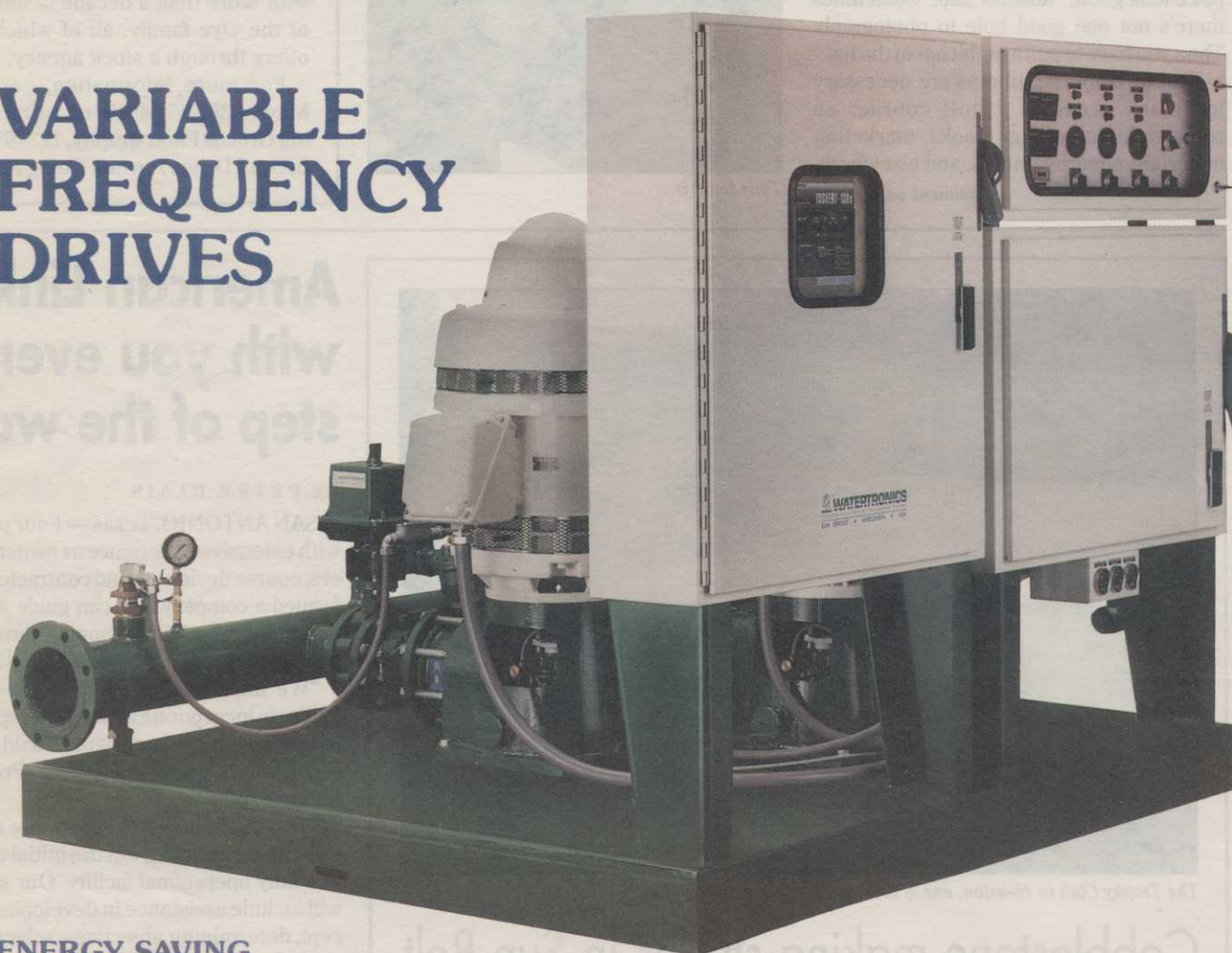
The result of increased maintenance costs, declining membership and smaller food and beverage profits, has been a drastic decrease in the amount of money available for debt service and capital improvements, Reilly said.

Debt reduction and capital improvement reserves plummeted 32.5 percent in 1992 to just 1.4 cents for every dollar of income. That compares to 8.1 cents in 1987 and 10.2 cents in 1982. With less money available from dues and other income sources, clubs are increasingly dependent on special assessments and depreciation to either finance improvements or retire loans.

With costs unlikely to reverse their upward spiral in the next few years, Reilly recommended creatively increasing income by making private clubs a destination point, much like resorts, for members and their families.

Ideas that have worked elsewhere, he noted, include family outings, summer camps, smaller clubs within the main club, and special functions.

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