

It's unanimous: GCSAA honors Hurdzan

By MARK LESLIE

Coincidence does not come into play here. Ask golf course builders which architect is most knowledgeable about the maintenance complex, environmental issues and the importance of bringing a superintendent onboard a project early, and your answer is often is Mike Hurdzan. Ask the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) who is getting its Distinguished Service Award this year and the lone

architect's name is announced: Mike Hurdzan. And what was the GCSAA board's vote for approval? Unanimous.

"Mike received the award because of his unselfishness with our members," said Gary Grigg, GCSAA vice president and the superintendent at Naples (Fla.) National Golf Club, where he worked hand in glove with Hurdzan. Speaking of Hurdzan's effective-



Dr. Michael Hurdzan

ness in speaking at superintendents' conferences, Grigg added, "First, he used to be a superintendent, so he fully understands it. Second, he's an agronomist, so he fully understands the agronomy, the drainage problems, everything from a superintendent's viewpoint."

Dr. Michael Hurdzan's history, in fact, reads: landscape business owner, five years;

greenkeeper, nine years; superintendent, two years; and course architect, 23 years. He earned a bachelor's degree in turfgrass management from Ohio State University, and master's degree in turfgrass physiology and PhD in environmental plant physiology studies from the University of Vermont.

A past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, sought-after speaker at turf conferences, and editorial adviser to *Golf Course News*, he was the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation's Man of the Year in 1988.

But the background in course

maintenance stands as the foundation of his career in golf. "I always knew I wanted to be a golf course architect," he said. "I didn't see how you could design one efficiently if you didn't know how to maintain one."

Winning the Distinguished Service Award, he said, is of particular importance to him because: "I have the utmost respect for the golf course superintendent. The superintendent is truly where the rubber meets the road. He stands between the golfer, who is the real critic, and the builders and architects, who are simply the guys putting it out there. He can make us look real good or not so good. He is in that pressure cooker every day."

The *Golf Course News* survey of course builders that spurred their recognition of Hurdzan asked:

- Which architect best understands the importance of the maintenance facility/complex?
- Which architect best understands the importance of having a superintendent on board early in a project?
- Who is most conscious of the environment?

"The single most important factor in golf course maintenance is hiring the superintendent. Second is giving him the right tools. The maintenance facility is definitely top among the right tools," Hurdzan said. "First, it is the central focus for the operations. Second, it needs to be environmentally correct — from EPA and hazardous materials views, and as a safe work environment."

The superintendent should have a major hand in designing the facility, which "takes a great deal of introspection," he said. "What they should be thinking about is fire walls, vehicular movement, hydraulic lifts, drains, that sort of thing. And the superintendent should be the one with the major input."

Hurdzan Design Group always asks its clients to hire the superintendent as early as possible. "I don't care if the superintendent is hired before us, but he should be brought on absolutely as early as possible," Hurdzan said. "Then it is his job to learn everything about that ground — soils, vegetation, drainage, climate, EPA laws and regulations that apply to that site, ground water — everything. And if somebody in the world knows more, he hasn't done his job."

Saying his training in golf course maintenance is "either a blessing or a curse," Hurdzan explained that 12 years ago he stepped into what was then a void as a defender of golf in the realm of environmental debate. An environmental innovator in design and construction, he said of his debate with environmental activists: "I see myself as a facilitator, not an environmental genius. I have enough background and experience that I know who to turn to. If someone gives me a negative environmental answer I know enough to question it."

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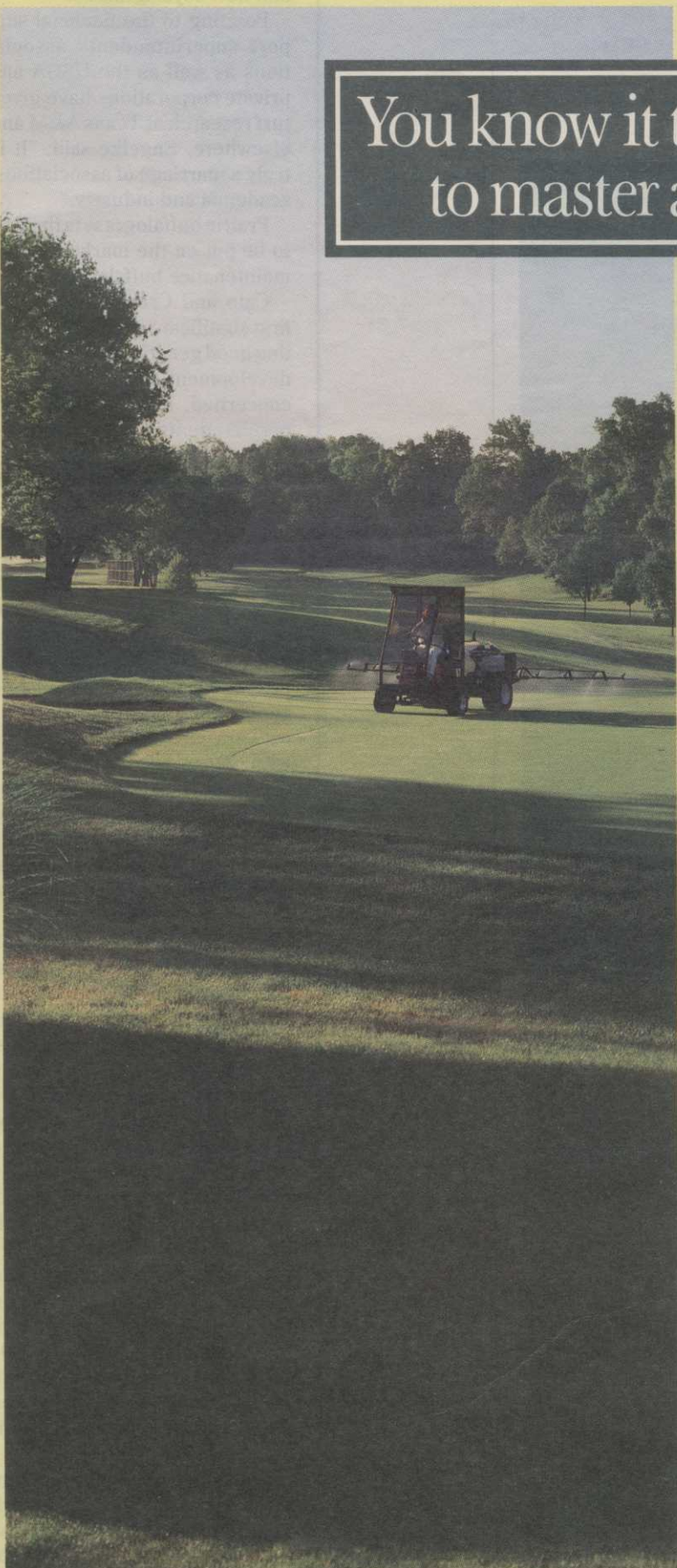
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