

Canada's top super, Lewis, still in temporary job

By MARK LESLIE

KELOWNA, B.C., Canada — It was a fluke, a temporary job offer from his municipal employer, that propelled Craig Lewis into the world of greenkeeping. Two decades later, Lewis is Canada's Superintendent of the Year.

Back in 1971, the corporation of the District of Surrey had an opening for a turf facility manager. "They prompted me into taking it until they could find someone else," said Lewis, who worked for the municipality as a horticulturist. "The more I got into it, the more I realized there was a lot more to growing turf than throwing fertilizer and water on it. Before long, I realized that's where I wanted to be."



Craig Lewis

"It was a funny twist of fate." About receiving Superintendent of the Year honors from the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association (CGSA) during its annual conference in Vancouver, March 2-5, Lewis said: "It's very flattering. I have a lot of respect for my fellow superintendents and I will very much cherish this for the rest of my life."

Calling himself "a recycled superinten-



Kelowna Country Club's 12th hole displays course's manicured beauty.

dent," Lewis traveled a winding road that has brought him back, on Jan. 2, to Kelowna Golf and Country Club, a semi-private facility where he had worked before.

While working for Surrey, he studied turf at British Columbia Institute of Technology in Vancouver and landscape technology in an apprenticeship program at British Columbia Vocational School. Graduating in 1975, he landed a superintendent's job in 1975 at Spallumcheen Golf & Tennis Club in Vernon. In 1977 he

left to travel Western Canada as a technical representative for O.M. Scott & Sons, a position he held two years.

"I kept looking for another way to look at things. That's how you get a well-rounded education," he explained.

In 1979 Lewis accepted a position as grounds superintendent at Kelowna, a member-owned club that squeezes 55,000 to 60,000 18-hole rounds a year into a nine-month season. There he remained until the spring of 1992 when "another way to look at things" came knocking at his door: Developers wanted a superintendent to oversee construction of nearby Quail Ridge Golf Resort.

After building Quail Ridge and beginning another project that fell through financially, Lewis was offered his old job back at Kelowna Golf & Country Club and jumped at the chance.

"Kelowna was a great job and club," he said. "But I wanted to know about the construction side of the business. You wonder if you could handle grow-in and construction from the ground up. Quail Ridge afforded me that opportunity. I left a very good job, got the



experience I wanted so badly, and now am back at Kelowna and I'm the luckiest guy in the world."

"There are lots of rewards, but construction is a young man's job," said the 43-year-old Lewis, a Master Superintendent. "My office was my pickup truck. You park your equipment under tents and trailers..."

Returning to the ranks of superintendents, Lewis called on his colleagues "to stand up and take a bow" for advancing their education and industry research. "We know more than ever before," he said. "The different associations fund research projects and, in turn, the researchers bring their findings to our seminars and annual conferences. We generated this. Nobody else made it happen."

"We thought, 'What do we need to learn about? Do we need to sharpen our people skills? Where is there a hole in our education? And that drives the content of our seminars and conferences.'"

Lewis also cited the golf industry's willingness to fund research in the face of accusations that it is polluting the environment.

"That shows the courage of the industry. We decided if we are doing something wrong, let's undo it. Through the Cape Cod study and others, we found out we weren't doing anything of the sort. But, we want to know either way. Hey, we have children and grandchildren of our own," said the husband and father of two.

Lewis got involved in this process early in his career. He joined the Western Canada Turfgrass Association in 1971 and served in all board positions from 1983-92. A member of the CGSA since 1975, he has served on many committees

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Case makes his case for inventive algae cure

By MARK LESLIE

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Algae. It's been a dreaded foe for the golf course superintendent... until now.

Superintendent Jeff Case of Quail Ridge Golf Course here has devised a cure for algae that USGA Green Section Mid-Continent Region Director Jim Moore termed "simple but ingenious."

And relatively cheap. Under \$500, Case guesses.

Spotting wet ground and associated algae, Case will spike or aerify the area, then bring in his secret weapon: a fan built into a frame that can be inverted and aimed directly at the ground, drying out the algae in little time.

Case suggested this process:

- Obtain a 36-inch-square, direct-drive shop fan (\$300 to \$400).
- Build a frame (about \$100 in materials) for it so that, when inverted, the fan is 36 to 40 inches off the ground.
- Place it on wide pneumatic tires to prevent rutting.
- Add a hitch so it can be hauled behind a vehicle. It should be light enough to easily maneuver by hand.

The fan, Case said, is "a really good tool to physically dry out the algae and give the turf more opportunity to fill in. Another advantage is that it's portable. If you have more than one area that is infected with algae, you just move from green to green.

"In some instances we put a generator in the back of the cart.

Other greens have electricity."

The height of 36 to 40 inches, he said, is because when the air hits the ground from that height it deflects and covers a larger area — 200 to 300 square feet.

Case warned that a person must watch carefully, "because it can dry an area so fast you can lose turf. You want to dry out the ground but not the leaf of the plant. This is why it's important to have a crew member close by at all times. He would be there also, to accommodate play."

Having a crew member present is also important, he said, because "you don't want to cause ruts" in that often-wet ground, or interfere with play.

After the algae is dried up, Case sometimes spot-fertilizes or overseeds the area.

The time required to dry off an algae-laden area varies as greatly as the wetness of the algae and the soil, he said. "On one green it may take three hours and another, 30 minutes. But it's worth the wait."



ON THE GREEN



Jeff Case checks the effect of his improvised "algae fan."

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Lewis, super

Continued from previous page

and coordinated the national conference in 1989.

What does the future hold for superintendents? More training in personnel management and environmental issues, Lewis said.

"Most of us are strong agronomically," he said. "Our weaknesses are almost always in the field of people-management skills. When there is a breakdown, when a superintendent gets himself in trouble, it's usually because of a lack of communication and poorly managing people. None of us learn that in school. I've attended many interpersonal relationship seminars, but I still think that is the focus, especially for young people coming up."

The environment, he added, "is a growing problem everywhere in North America — and it should be. Superintendents are stewards of large tracts of land and it's incumbent on us to exercise the very best in management practices, with the idea of being soft on the environment.

"Sometimes it's tough because you deal with peoples' perceptions rather than facts. But that keeps us sharp and on our toes."

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