

GOLF COURSE NEWS

THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE GOLF COURSE INDUSTRY

A UNITED PUBLICATION
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 5
MAY 1996 • \$4.50

INSIDE

Builders' Market

If current construction figures are any indication, more than 500 courses should open this year 3

Agronomic Q&A

In a new feature, *GCN* poses the questions; university researchers provide the answers 15

Fighting Pond Scum

Ozone systems and bacteria can help overcome every superintendent's aquatic nightmare 39



BLAST FROM THE PAST

Donald Ross, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, relates his thoughts on golfers and design during the 50th meeting of the ASGCA. Complete coverage begins on page 43.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

Job market strong for golf course mechanics 11
Bermudagrass cultivars on the ropes? 15
Complete listing of golf industry web sites 30,31

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Old automobile tires play a role in irrigation 5
Q&A with globetrotting Ron Fream 43
Real Golf, Olson busy in Haiphong, Fullerton 51

COURSE MANAGEMENT

Maryland family battles elements, government 53
Brassie looks to increase profits 54
Former NGCOA president forms consultancy 55

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

Lofts Seed sold to North Carolina distributor 59
biosys acquires AgriDyne Technologies 60
Barenbrug purchases national reach 61

More graduates chasing fewer jobs?

Assistant positions plentiful; head jobs in short supply

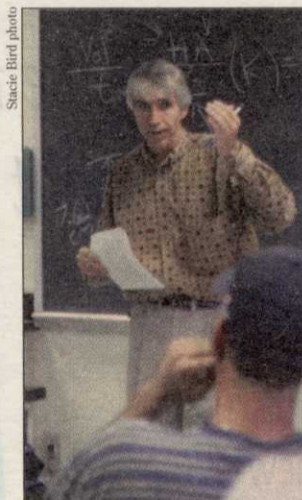
By PETER BLAIS

The demand for assistant superintendents remains strong, which bodes well for the turf school students set to graduate this spring who will fill many of those positions. However, even in the face of a record 468 new course openings in 1995, making the leap from assistant to head superintendent or retaining the top maintenance post remains a challenging proposition.

"We have heard about many more assistant jobs than we have graduates to fill them," said John 'Trey' Rogers, associate professor at Michigan State University. "The only people who seem to be having problems are those who have restricted themselves to a certain geographic area."

Faculty at Ohio State and Pennsylvania State universities echoed Rogers' senti-

Continued on page 21



PSU's Dr. Charles Mancino, asst. professor of turfgrass science.

TURF SCHOOL REPORT

- How's the job market for mechanics? p. 11
- Complete listing of 2-year & 4-year turf programs, p. 20

As turf grads grow in number, so do worries of saturation

By J. BARRY MOTHES

The number of graduates from collegiate turfgrass programs this year will again be higher than last year. That, along with an increase in two-year degree and certificate programs, has fueled a strong perception there may be too many turfgrass graduates heading into the job market.

"I think there might be a bit of an overload," said William Torello, a professor of turfgrass management at the University of Massachusetts for the past 15 years. "I think there is a saturation level and I think we're real near it — if not at it."

"But almost 100 percent of our people do get placed. They may not all be assistant superintendents right away, but they get work. The golf course industry is certainly becoming loaded with trained people."

The Golf Course Superintendents As-

Continued on page 23

New player emerges in group buying

By LOU PRATO

ELLICOTT CITY, Md.— A new nationwide buying cooperative aimed at getting major price breaks for golf course owners and superintendents on everything from chemicals to maintenance equipment is seeking its first charter members in the East.

National Turf Cooperative, Inc. (NTC), based here near Baltimore, expects to have at least 250 members signed up when it starts buying seeds, fertilizer, and other such goods from manufacturers and suppliers in October of 1996. NTC will concentrate initially on buying products necessary for the development and maintenance of golf courses.

Continued on page 27



Temporary clubhouses don't have to be unsightly trailers sitting starkly in parking lots. To wit, this clubhouse facility at Hamilton Golf Club in Fishers, Ind.

Pre-fab clubhouses keep priorities on course

By PETER BLAIS

Golf developers are heeding the advice of course designers and installing temporary clubhouses, allowing the course to establish a reputation and generate revenue before building a first-class clubhouse facility. While the idea might seem a bit self serving since course architects are paid for the course they design rather than the clubhouse that borders it, few would argue that it is the course rather than the clubhouse that first attracts players to a golf facility.

"Getting the course right and waiting on the permanent clubhouse is a con-

cept I endorse," said course architect David Horn of Architerra PC, a course design firm in Catasauqua, Pa. "You can get a good, prefab clubhouse for \$100,000 or less to get you through the first few years until the cash flow is sufficient to build a permanent one."

In fact, if done right, a prefab clubhouse can be attractive and may suffice much longer than a developer may initially think. Horn said he has sent many clients to see the supposedly temporary facility at Center Valley (Pa.) Club just south of Bethlehem, Pa.

Geoffrey Cornish-designed Center

Continued on page 57

GCSAA shares job fears with PGA, who took steps to help pros

By PETER BLAIS

Expanding job opportunities and influencing job continuity — concerns that have also been raised by Professional Golfers Association of America members — has become part of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's strategic plan.

"The golf course superintendent's profession is not exempt from such trends as downsizing," warned Tommy Witt, GCSAA board member and chairman of the superintendent association's career development committee.

Fears about too many people chasing too few jobs is something superintendents and golf pros have had to wrestle with in today's uncertain economic environment. Several years ago, the Professional Golfers Association introduced a new certification program designed to break up the logjam of aspiring apprentices wanting to become certified golf pros.

Prior to June 1993, would-be golf professionals usually started their careers working at a course pro shop. After a few months of on-the-job training, they attended the PGA's Business School I classroom program followed by Business School II. Getting to that point typically meant apprentice

pros had invested significant time and energy preparing for their careers. Before enrolling in Business School II, however, they had to pass the Player Ability Test (PAT).

This is where the logjam occurred. The PAT requires that apprentices play 36 holes within 15 strokes of par. For example, an apprentice taking the test at a par-72 layout must shoot no more than 159 [(2x72) + 15] to pass the test. Many apprentices got stuck at the PAT, either taking several tries before finally shooting the required score or never hitting the magic number and having to give up their dream of becoming certified head pros.

Many apprentices stayed in the business, however, working as assistant pros. And since entry into the field was easy and the lifestyle seemingly attractive, many more would-be pros continued to pour in. The result was a glut of apprentices.

The PGA recognized the problem. Acting on a study recommending the association revamp its educational offerings and upgrade members' skills, the PGA moved the PAT to the front of its educational program in 1993. Would-be pros could not enter the apprenticeship program until they had passed the playing test. The goal was to make sure people did not get stuck at the appren-

ticeship level. Of the 12,200 people who took the PAT in 1995, roughly 20 percent passed, according to PGA figures.

"We felt we had to upgrade our standards for people to realize that golf was really a business," Hunkler said. "We never set a maximum number we would accept. We simply needed to upgrade our standards. The result was a slight decrease in the number of people coming into the program."

The PGA followed the front-loaded PAT requirement with additional steps an apprentice must complete before becoming a certified pro. These were:

- A two-day professional readiness program which includes discussions regarding a golf pro's compensation; time required to complete the program; and required skills and aptitudes.

- A formal business school program that includes two elective and 19 core courses, skill simulations performed in classroom settings and work experience.

"It typically takes an apprentice three or four years to complete the program and become a head pro, although it could probably be done in as little as 18 months," Hunkler said.

The PGA added two other programs, one designed to expand career opportunities and the other to match PGA pros

with employers.

The first program recognizes the many career paths available in today's golf industry. It allows members to maintain their accreditation as golf professionals while working as instructors at indoor golf facilities, general managers of golf complexes, teachers at golf schools, technicians for equipment companies and administrators in various golf-related businesses.

"The golf industry has grown and the PGA wanted to recognize that there are many careers available for its members," Hunkler said. "For example in the Northeast and Midwest, many of our members were spending more time teaching at indoor facilities than they were outdoors."

The second program, called Career Links, uses computers to match employer job opening requests with potential job seekers. A PGA member puts his resume on file with Career Links.

When an employer lists an opening with certain skill requirements, Career Links searches its files for potential candidates whose skills match those requirements.

Resumes are forwarded to the potential employer who reviews the materials and sets up interviews. The program was just started last fall.

Job openings

Continued from page 1

winter programs have found jobs," said OSU assistant professor David Willoughby. "We have 12 to 15 openings right now and no one to fill them. There seems to be a lot of construction going on and a number of people retiring from the business."

Added Penn State instructor George Hamilton: "It's been a banner year for assistants. There have been a number of course openings, particularly near Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. A new course generally hires away the assistant superintendent from somewhere else to be its new head superintendent. That leaves an assistant opening at his old course as well as an assistant position to be filled at his new one."

Hamilton noted that with the additional administrative responsibilities being placed on head superintendents, many assistants are now doing the day-to-day work done by the head superintendent 10 or 15 years ago. Today's assistant superintendent often oversees a second assistant, who does the work the first assistant used to do. Consequently, there are more assistant superintendents.

Hamilton said Penn State's agronomy office recently listed 51 assistant openings ("a significant increase over a year ago.") and 16 head superintendent positions ("about the same as last year."). Other schools report the number of head superintendent listings remaining stagnant as well.

"The problem is getting from assistant to that next level," Rogers said. "It's a real dogfight for head superintendent jobs."

Part of the problem is the growing number of turf school graduates. While the Michigans, Penn States and Ohios have kept enrollments steady ("We reject two applicants for every one we accept." — Hamilton, Penn State), many schools have added new turf programs or expanded existing ones. The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America "guess-

imates" there are 2,000 two- and four-year turf students at about 120 schools nationwide, said GCSAA spokesman Scott Smith.

"Those numbers worry existing superintendents, but the course owners think it's great," Rogers said. "It's a buyer's market. A course owner can get a young head superintendent for \$28,000 a year, keep him for a few years, then let him go and get a new guy for \$28,000 down the road. If the owner charges \$15 to \$20 a round and is pretty certain of getting that regardless of the course condition, he figures there's no reason to ever pay anyone more than \$35,000 a year if there is a young guy who will start well below that."

GCSAA has tried to educate course owners as to the importance of hiring, keeping and paying for experienced superintendents. The association's Career Development Department beefed up its quarterly newsletter, *Leader Board*, which addresses the superintendent's role in caring for an owner's multi-million-dollar investment. GCSAA has also sought to strengthen relationships with management companies and other multi-course operators. And it is offering more seminars on subjects like resume writing and job-interview skills.

For their part, superintendents are more aggressive in applying for new jobs, Hamilton said. That has put additional pressure on existing superintendents. It has also allowed owners to keep salaries lower.

The difficulty in finding or keeping head superintendent posts has led many to leave for positions in consulting, sales, course design and construction, Rogers noted.

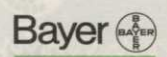
"I've always told students that being a superintendent is one of the hardest jobs in the world," he said. "It's a lot like being a football coach. A football coach's career is dependent on the legs of an 18-year-old kid. He can prepare his player for a game, but he has absolutely no control over him come Saturday afternoon. Likewise, a superintendent can try to prepare his course. But, ultimately, he is at the mercy of the weather, something he has no control over either."

ONE FUNGICIDE TEES OFF ON ANTHRACNOSE.



Prevent anthracnose with BAYLETON® Fungicide. No other fungicide provides better control. By a long shot.

To find out more, contact Bayer Corporation, Specialty Products, Box 4913, Kansas City, MO 64120. (800) 842-8020.



With expanded 4-year programs, turf schools concerned with supply

Continued from page 1

sociation of America estimates there are approximately 2,000 two- and four-year turfgrass students at about 120 different schools. Turfgrass programs typically fall into one of the following categories: two-year associate's degree programs, two-year certificate programs and four-year bachelor degree programs.

The estimated number of turfgrass graduates in 1996 ranges from a relatively small group of eight bachelor-degree graduates at the University of Rhode Island, to approximately 65 two and four-year graduates at Michigan State and Penn State, to 80 combined two- and four-year graduates at the University of Massachusetts.

At each of the above schools, these numbers are essentially the same as they were for 1995 and 1994 — but significantly higher than 1990 and 1985.

In the meantime, a record 468 new golf courses opened in 1995.

Many colleges and universities — like Penn State, Michigan State and Massachusetts — employ caps on the number of students they annually accept into their two-year programs and have for many years. The increase is coming within the four-year degree programs.

At Michigan State, for example, the number of four-year turfgrass students has jumped from eight in 1988, to 72 in 1996, with about 16 graduates expected this year and most of them heading to the golf course industry. Penn State will have somewhere between 30 and 40 four-year turfgrass degree graduates this year, compared with 12 to 15 in the mid-1980s.

Driving the sharp increase in turfgrass students in the late 1980s and early 1990s — and to a lesser extent today — was an increase in new two-year degree and certificate turfgrass programs at schools that hadn't offered them before.

"It seems like [two-year] programs have been popping up everywhere," said George Hamilton, a technical advisor and instructor at Penn State. "People are focusing on quantity and not quality. It's not just the number of graduates, it's the quality of those graduates. With a lot of schools it seems like it's boom — 'We're going to put a turfgrass program together.'"

Many of these new two-year turfgrass certificate or degree programs were launched at community or junior colleges.

"I think we need both kinds of programs [degree and certificate]," said John "Trey" Rogers, an associate professor at Michigan State University. "I think they'll both be there for a long time. Under no circumstances are all 15,000 golf courses created equal and the needs at each course are different."

Not all colleges and universities report increasing enrollments or programs over the past five to 10 years. Lake City College in northern Florida has actually trimmed back the number of students in its three-year associate of science degree program known as "Golf Course Operations" — from about 40 to 45 in the late 1980s, to about 28 in 1996.

"We backed off on the number of students because we felt the marketplace indicated we didn't need as many — and 25 or so students is a more comfortable number to handle," said John Piersol, chairman of the divisions of golf course operations and landscape technology at Lake City and a 22-year faculty member. Lake City, situated between Tallahassee

SEE RELATED STORIES, PAGES 20-21

and Jacksonville, has offered a turfgrass program since 1967.

A clear trend in turfgrass education these days is more students enrolling in four-year bachelor programs, especially at the larger state universities. The idea schools are pitching, and students seem to be accepting, is that four-year degree programs offer a broader, more extensive education which will help the prospective golf course superintendent prepare for the fast-changing future.

Several professors at turfgrass schools said many golf clubs and golf courses now expect applicants to have four-year turfgrass degrees. There is also the future possibility that the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) may require four-year degrees for certification, which would affect a number of issues ranging from professional prestige to earning power.

Even now, a graduate with a four-year bachelor's degree in turf or plant science requires less on-the-job experience and fewer continuing education credits to be eligible for GCSAA certification.

"The profession has done a good job of promoting itself and attracting a lot of young

The increase in turf students is coming within the four-year degree programs.

students," said Rogers at Michigan State University. "If we get an 18 or 19-year-old student... 10 years ago we would say, 'Get into a two-year program and you'll be fine.' Now we'll say, 'A four-year program is where you want to be because you don't know where the industry is going.'

"It will be interesting to see where we'll all be 10 years from now with the four-year students," said Rogers. "That will be a good thing to watch."



Taking over new turf.



Kubota also offers an M4700 model with 4-wheel drive.

You know our M-Series mid-size tractors for their all-round versatility. Now we're going after some new turf.

Introducing our M4700, 2-wheel drive Turf Special. It's got wide flotation turf tires, a low-profile front end, creep speed for spraying and turf conditioning and a sunshade for added comfort.

Like all Kubota tractors, the M4700 is loaded with features that increase productivity and make operation easy.

An ISO-mounted, semi-flat deck greatly reduces vibration

Creep speed transmission has 12 forward speeds (0.17-13.76 mph) with turf tires.

and minimizes fatigue, while hanging pedals add comfort and ease of operation.

The E-TVCS 5-cylinder diesel engine delivers maximum power, with high torque, low noise and low vibration. Enhanced combustion efficiently

reduces fuel cost and lowers emissions.

The Kubota M4700 Turf Special. It's designed from the ground up for landscape and turf applications. And then some.

For more information, please write to:

Kubota

KUBOTA TRACTOR CORPORATION
P.O. Box 2992, Dept. GCN
Torrance, CA 90509-2992

Financing available through Kubota Credit Corporation

