

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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#### 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.

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## More graduates chasing fewer jobs?

Assistant positions plentiful; head jobs in short supply

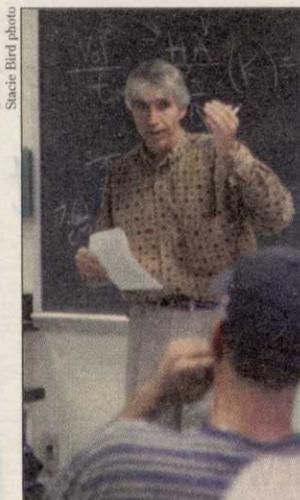
By PETER BLAIS

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-

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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-

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## New player emerges in group buying

By LOU PRATO

ELLCOTT 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.

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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

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# 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."



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