

Canada's finest, Super of Year Kirkpatrick, breaks the mold

By MARK LESLIE

KITCHENER, Ontario, Canada — He quit school but kept on learning. Indeed, he became the teacher, training eight Class A superintendents. He "loves" to prepare his course, Westmount Golf & Country Club here, for an annual Ladies PGA Tour event. He was a golf course "shaper," who left the profession but still uses the skill whenever he can. Since becoming a golf course superintendent in 1966, he has innovated, renovated and relocated.



Hugh Kirkpatrick

And now, Hugh Kirkpatrick has been recognized as Canada's Superintendent of the Year.

"I can't believe the recognition I've been getting from other superintendents and managers, and how sincere people are," Kirkpatrick said. "It's tremendous."

And, surprising. Kirkpatrick wouldn't even hire himself if he tried to come aboard today. "When I hire an assistant," he said, "they need at least a two-year diploma in turfgrass."

Attesting to the fact that superintendents are better educated than when he broke into the business 30 years ago, Kirkpatrick said: "I think if a superintendent got out of the business, it would be difficult for him to get back in. It's hard to keep up [with the advances]."

Kirkpatrick first learned the golf course business from a bulldozer when his father's business started to specialize in course construction and Hugh and his brothers joined in. Hugh's expertise became "shaping," performing the final touches to the greens and other contours of a course.

After four years, having traversed Canada and seeing little of his family, he landed a superintendent position at Conestoga Golf Club. Five years later, architect Robbie Robinson needed a superintendent at a new course, Dalewood Golf Course in the Port Hope area. He stayed there until Westmount needed someone to help get the course in shape for its Golden Anniversary in 1979 and offered him the job.

Through this all, Kirkpatrick never stopped learning, gaining certified golf course superintendent status.

"I've always gone to a lot of seminars. Even before [the national association] was doing them, our provincial association was always strong in education," said the former president of the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association. "A lot of it was picking guys' brains."

In turn, Kirkpatrick has tried to pass on what he has learned to others, including the eight Class A superintendents he has trained.

"I think clubs like Westmount are there to polish people and make sure they can take the job over," he said. "It's important, if clubs are going to hire assistants to be superintendents, that they be prepared for more than just working on a course. They should be able to assume a management role."

So, working with Kirkpatrick,



Hugh Kirkpatrick's Westmount Golf & Country Club still a work in progress, as he refurbishes the Stanley Thompson design.



assistants attend green committee meetings, work the books and take over responsibilities he delegates to them.

Sharing knowledge beyond a superintendent's own course is also crucial to the profession, he said.

"Sharing, helping other superintendents whenever you can — that's where we all learn a lot," he said. "That kind of thing is what makes our profession stronger than others. That's not the case in construction. But, if they come up with a better way to do something, most superintendents share. And we all get better because of that."

Kirkpatrick used that sort of help, and his own background, to bring Westmount back into shape and make necessary renovations over the years.

"It's a wonderful old course," he said, "and quite a few changes have been made over the last 18 years. We've

redone most of the tees. It was a two-tee course and we now have four. I've rebuilt four greens to USGA specs. We also redid our practice range a few years ago, adding 10 target greens."

Who did the shaping? "I did," he said. "It's like riding a bike."

"Without a little construction work on our course it would get a little boring. The construction background makes you more efficient."

Kirkpatrick is now contemplating bunker restoration next year — a project that is "a little too big for us to do in-house" — and replacement of the 25-year-old irrigation system.

Though the course is a Stanley Thompson design, Kirkpatrick feels the famed architect didn't spend much time on site. "You don't see his bunkers here. We're going to try to copy his style," he said.

Meanwhile, he continues to try to

stay at the forefront of industry advances:

- Trying to keep bentgrass greens alive on "a tremendously shaded golf course," he and Rhod Traynor of Hamilton Golf Club were the first superintendents to install greenside fans this far north.

- He maintains both turfgrass and tree nurseries, saying: "Not enough people have nurseries. That's a good place to try new cultivars. And if you haven't used a chemical or fertilizer, that's a good place to try it."

With advice from a consulting arborist, he has implemented woodlot management. Dead or dying trees are removed and 3- to 4-inch-caliber trees from the nursery are transplanted.

- Westmount was among the first Canadian courses to join the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System for Golf Courses, and though he hasn't had the manpower to do enough chores to earn certification, he said: "I think our course complies with most of the specifications. We preserve wetlands, places like that. We have to remember it's a golf course first and we can't have long grass everywhere."

Amidst it all, Kirkpatrick thrives on challenges.

Doing so, he said, "is kind of fun. The hardest thing is, the course is so much busier than it used to be. Kitchener is a snowbelt area and the season is shorter than Toronto. We used to get 25,000 rounds a year. Now it's 32,000 on these small, old greens."

And tournament preparation? "It's always fun for the superintendent and staff," he said, "because they know they've got a good product. Usually the people who come to play it are very

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MetGCSA honors Lucas with '96 Moore award

OLD GREENWICH, Conn. — Superintendent Pat Lucas of Innis Arden Golf Club here has been presented the Sherwood A. Moore Award for 1996 by the Metropolitan Golf Course Superintendents Association (MetGCSA).

Announcing the selection, Westchester Country Club superintendent Joe Alonzi, immediate past president of the MetGCSA, said: "Pat has added a new dimension to the word devotion both in his veteran career and life in general. No one is more dedicated to the cause, welfare and benefit of the golf course superintendent than Pat."

A former editor of the MetGCSA's Tee to Green newsletter, Lucas served on the association board for 11 years and as its president for a term.

The graduate of University of Massachusetts School of Turf Management also holds a degree in club management from Manhattanville College in Purchase.

Lucas has been at Innis Arden since 1977. Before that, he worked at Little Falls (N.Y.) Municipal Golf Course, James River Country Club in Newport News, Va., Yahnundasis Golf Club in Utica, N.Y. and Morefar in Brewster, N.Y.

N.J. cites Pedrazzi for distinguished service

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Peter Pedrazzi Sr., who retired last year after 31 years as superintendent at Crestmont Country Club in Florham Park, was presented the Distinguished Service Award by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey (GCSANJ) during the

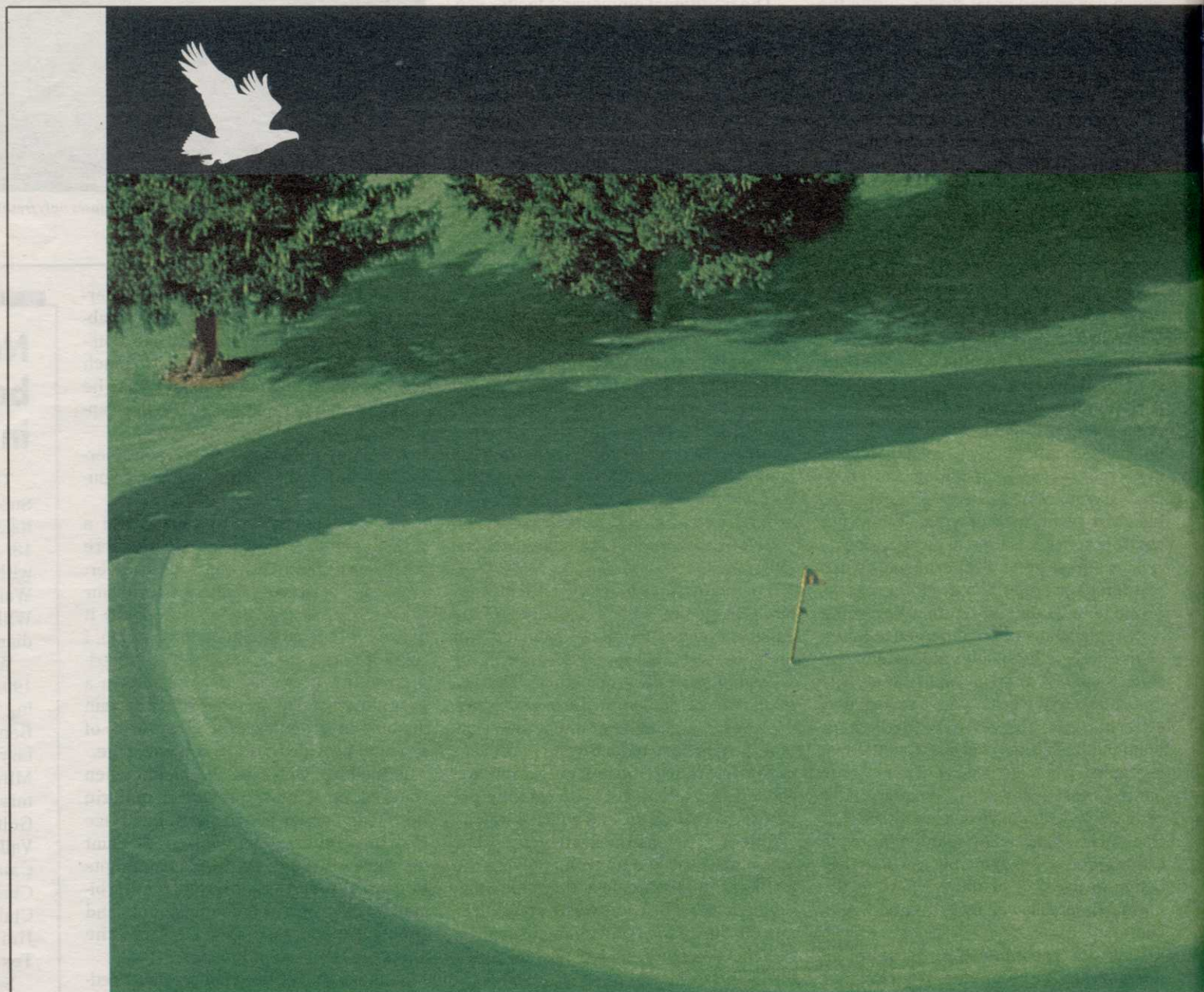
Turf Expo here recently.

The award recognizes a lifetime commitment and service to the superintendent's profession and GCSANJ.

Pedrazzi served on the GCSANJ board for a number of years, including two as secretary and two as vice president.

Meanwhile, GCSANJ pre-

sented Shaun Barry with the first annual Member of the Year Award. Barry was first elected as a director in 1987 and continued on the board as commercial representative. He helped run the GCSANJ Invitational until 1991 when he was appointed chairman of the committee. He has also done other board duties.



Canada's best

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appreciative of it — maybe more so than the members who see it all the time.

"You don't change a lot. You double-cut for quicker greens. But the course is close to tournament conditions most of the time. We let the roughs grow a little. The LPGA doesn't want you to change much."

In the 26 years Kirkpatrick has been a superintendent the greatest changes he has seen have been the quality of turfgrass, the speed at which chores need to be done, and the advent of tremendous aeration equipment — from deep-tine to HydroJect.

"The fairways are like greens used to be," he said, "and the play is so busy it's hard working around the golfers. Plus, we're in the middle of the city and because of noise laws, we can't make noise before 7 a.m. That has necessitated a larger crew — from 15 in 1978 to 22 or 23 in the summer now — and using walking greensmowers. The crew is a little larger but we use more part-timers."

When not spending time on his course or with his family, Kirkpatrick plays golf. "I think it's very important that superintendents play golf," he said. "You really see your golf course and others' courses in a different light. You see all the things golfers complain about — whether a green, or puffy lies, or whatever. If you're driving on your machines you might not see it."

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Mike Jones
Valley High Country Club
Elk Grove, CA

"We go into the season with really nice greens," says Mike Jones, superintendent at Valley High Country Club in Elk Grove, CA.

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Rich Hardebeck
Eagle Lake Golf Club
Farmington, MO

Tackling dollar spot and brown patch

Rich Hardebeck is superintendent at Eagle Lake Golf Club in

Farmington, MO. When he first came to Eagle Lake, he experienced extremely heavy dollar spot on his ryegrass and bluegrass fairways.

"Last year," says Rich, "I applied Eagle preventatively in April and again in September and didn't see dollar spot all summer."



Dave Anderson
Evergreen Country Club
Haymarket, VA

Dollar spot was also Dave Anderson's problem, as well as brown patch on his ryegrass fairways.