

Fearis assumes presidency at Orlando conclave

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ORLANDO, Fla. — David Fearis, a 31-year member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, will be elected president of the national association at February's International Conference and Show here. Fearis, 52, is head superintendent at Blue Hills Country Club in Kansas City, Mo., and has served on the GCSAA board since 1993. He responded recently to a list of questions posed by Golf Course News.

Golf Course News: What will be your primary goal during your year as GCSAA president?

David Fearis: If I had to list a primary goal, it would be the education of the employer/influential golfer. If we can educate this group to better understand the golf course superintendent's job, the result could be increased job security, recognition, compensation, and job opportunities.

This actually is part of the mission statement of the membership standard's initiative. Right now, job security isn't a description often found in our profession. You hear numerous stories about a golf course superintendent who has been at a golf facility for 10 to 15 years and has one bad year and is fired.

Why? Because in many cases, that employer/influential golfer doesn't understand our jobs. We have raised the standard of golf course conditions so high that many golfers expect this year after year. Yet we are still dealing with Mother Nature.

GCSAA is working to provide programs

to educate the employer/influential golfer.

GCN: What is GCSAA doing to help superintendents move along their career paths and up into positions such as general manager, director of golf, etc.? Anything similar to the PGA's Career Links program?

Fearis: The obvious one is education. We are offering an increased number of seminars dealing with business, management and communication skills.

Also, we now award external Continuing Education Units for approved seminars offered by other associations like the PGA, CMAA or companies like National Seminars, Padgett Thompson, Fred Pryor, etc. These companies and associations offer many good seminars dealing with subjects, other than agronomics, which could further the golf course superintendent's skills to allow him to become a general manager or a director of golf.

The mission of the membership standards initiative is to increase the value of the golf course superintendent in the eyes of employers and influential golfers, resulting in increased compensation, security, recognition and job opportunities for qualified members. To me, this means showing employers that the superintendent has a high level of education, manages the largest staff, budget, and asset at a golf facility, and is therefore very qualified to become a director of golf and/or a general manager.



David Fearis

GCN: Are superintendents making use of new information technology — like the Internet?

Fearis: Definitely. The GCSAA's website alone receives over 1 million hits per month.

Also, GCSAA offers a complete turf management course on the web. This course is offered by the Penn State World

Campus and consists of six different courses dealing with turf management. Each successfully completed course offers 4.5 CEUs. You can access Penn State's class through the GCSAA website.

Also, a self-study, correspondence course entitled, "Responsible Pesticide Use for Golf Course Superintendents," will make its debut at the conference in Orlando. This course will also be offered over GCSAA's website.

GCSAA considers these new learning technologies so important that it has created a new department, Learning Systems Innovation & Design. A department goal is to find new ways to educate members through modern, technological means.

GCN: We ran an article recently on superintendents leaving the field because of mounting job pressures. Have you seen an increase in burnout among experienced superintendents? As a longtime superintendent yourself, what would you recommend superiors do to avoid burnout?

Fearis: I don't know if burnout is new among experienced superintendents. We are much more aware of it because of our im-

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Tampa courses offer challenge for tourney

By ANDREW OVERBECK

TAMPA BAY, Fla. — Participants in the 1999 GCSAA Golf Championship will have to negotiate tall pine and cypress trees, large waste bunkers, and the occasional alligator at three of the demanding Innisbrook Resort golf courses.

The tournament, which will be held in tandem with the 70th International Golf Course Conference and Show, will be held Feb. 8-9. Toro Co. is again sponsoring the event that will be held at six different golf courses in the Tampa area.

Defending champion Al Pondel, superintendent at Deerfield Country Club in suburban Chicago, heads up the field of nearly 700 golfers who are divided into several flights based on handicaps.

Pondel won last year's El Nino-shortened event by shooting a blistering 69 on the opening day of the tournament. He held on to win over runner-up Tim Scott, superintendent at Stony Creek Golf Course in Addison, Ill., after rains canceled the second and final round of play.

"I came out and tried to get through the first round with a good score. I hit the ball well, hit a lot of

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GCSAA to honor Pebble's Horton with Environmental award

ORLANDO, Fla. — Citing him for efforts that "personify what superintendents strive for each and every day," the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has chosen Edward C. "Ted" Horton to receive the 1999 President's Award for Environmental Leadership.

Horton, vice president of resource management at Pebble Beach Co., will be honored at the Golf, Government and Environmental General Session scheduled at 8:45 a.m. Feb. 12, at the International Golf Course Conference and Show here.

GCSAA's board of directors selected Horton in recognition of his environmental leadership at Pebble Beach and his pivotal role in the Golf and the Environment Summit process that led to developing the groundbreaking Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States.

"Ted Horton's work has long been respected within the golf industry," said GCSAA president George Renault III. "Golf is truly a friend of the environment, and Ted's efforts personify what superintendents strive for each and every day."

Horton's environmental initiatives at Pebble Beach have included golf course recycling and effluent irrigation programs. He also works with community groups and is widely respected as a speaker on the topic of golf's environmental impacts.

The awards ceremony also will include presentation of the national winners in the GCSAA Environmental Steward Awards (ESAs) competition. The ESAs honor environmental excellence among golf courses and recognize the innovative practices their superintendents use to protect, preserve and enhance golf's environment. The session will conclude with a panel discussion with top executives of the allied associations of golf discussing their associations and their views on the role of the golf course superintendent.

The President's Award for Environmental Leadership was established in 1991 to recognize "an exceptional environmental contribution to the game of golf: a contribution that further exemplifies the golf course superintendent's image as a steward of the land."

...and Florida's Jones with Distinguished Service Award

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has confirmed that longtime superintendent Dan Jones will receive the association's 1999 Distinguished Service Award.

Jones was superintendent at Banyan Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Fla., from 1980 until his retirement in April 1998.

He is currently the East Coast sales manager of Toro Liquid Ag, Inc.

The award will be presented to Jones during the opening ceremonies at the GCSAA's 70th International Golf Course Conference and Show here, Feb. 8-14.

Jones is being recognized for his 33 years in the turf industry, where he has been an innovator and leader in the

business. He was instrumental in the late 1970s in bringing the white amur grass carp into the state to help control aquatic weeds and reduce the amount of chemicals used in waterways.

Jones has served as president of the local Palm Beach Chapter of the Florida GCSA, president of the Florida Turfgrass Association and was the editor and publisher of the national award-winning magazine, *The Florida Green*, for 13 years.

He has been named editor emeritus in honor of his contributions to the growth and success of the magazine.

In 1987 Jones received the Florida GCSA Distinguished Service Award and also received the Florida Turfgrass Association's Wreath of Grass Award.

Outgoing president off to warmer climes

By PETER BLAIS

NAPLES, Fla. — Eagle's Creek Country Club here has hired outgoing GCSAA President George Renault, as head superintendent. Renault assumed his new position Jan. 1.



George Renault

Eagle's Creek, a private, 18-hole layout, opened in 1980. Renault's first projects at his new club will include rebuilding the greens and installing a new irrigation system.

"It was a better opportunity," Renault explained of his move from a Burning Tree Club in Bethesda, Md., where he served as head superintendent for the past eight years.

Prior to Burning Tree, Renault was head superintendent at Chevy Chase (Md.) Club; Penderbrook Golf Club in Fairfax, Va.; and Goose Creek Country Club in Leesburg, Va.

A 20-year GCSAA member, Renault has served on the GCSAA Board of Directors since 1993 and chaired numerous committees. He is also a member of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act Golf Advisory Commission, Watson Fellowship Selection Committee and Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment [RISE] government issues committee.

Renault earned a certificate in golf and turfgrass management from the University of Maryland. He and his wife, Lucinda, have two children: George, 21 and Lucy, 17.

Fearis Q&A

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proved methods of communication.

Burnout was always there; our jobs 10, 15 and 20 years ago were not easy. It requires working long hours and dealing with Mother Nature on a daily basis.

Expectations of golfers are extremely high and oftentimes unrealistic. However, I saw an article published in the USGA

Green Section about how golfers wanted faster greens. The article was written in the 1920s.

To avoid burnout, I would recommend superintendents have other interests or hobbies. I know superintendents who are volunteer firemen; are active in their church; coach their son's or daughter's sports team; serve on the city council. This is easy to say, but really hard to do.

My other interest is my involvement in GCSAA.

Golf course superintendents are workaholics; they spend 60 to 70 hours a week on their jobs. So it only makes sense that they need to get their minds off their jobs and focus on other interests or hobbies.

GCN: How has the consolidation of golf course ownership and subsequent growth of management companies affected the su-

perintendent?

Fearis: Corporate America has entered our profession. Golf has become a business first and a recreation-based game second. A result has been the growth of management companies.

Obviously, there are pros and cons. They do offer a superintendent with good business, management, and communication skills, an opportunity to ad-

vance to positions like regional agronomists, general managers, and/or directors of golf.

One of the negatives, some say, is they replace higher-paid, experienced golf course superintendents with less-experienced, lower-paid superintendents.

Who knows? Like them or not, they seem to be here to stay.

GCN: Has there been any adverse reaction to the requirement that those joining local chapters also join the GCSAA?

Fearis: I haven't heard of any adverse reaction. GCSAA realizes that its strength lies in its chapters. Therefore, we have worked very hard to provide services and programs to help our chapters. We publish a 55-page booklet, which lists these services and programs, which directly benefit the chapters and their members.

Trust is the word, and hopefully golf course superintendents realize GCSAA is there to help them with their jobs and advance the profession.

GCN: How do you plan to handle the many responsibilities of being GCSAA president and operate a golf club at the same time?

Fearis: It definitely is a challenge. When I was with Scotts & Co., I learned time and organizational skills which have helped me immensely.

Also, it is pretty obvious you have to have a good crew. I am very fortunate to have an exceptional one. They are dedicated and very professional.

It also helps that I am only 40 minutes away from GCSAA headquarters. That cuts down on travel time when board and/or committee meetings are there.

It is a time-consuming job. But if I weren't having fun, I wouldn't do it. I'm also fortunate to work with another group of dedicated and professional people — the board of directors and the GCSAA staff. Both will make my job a lot easier.

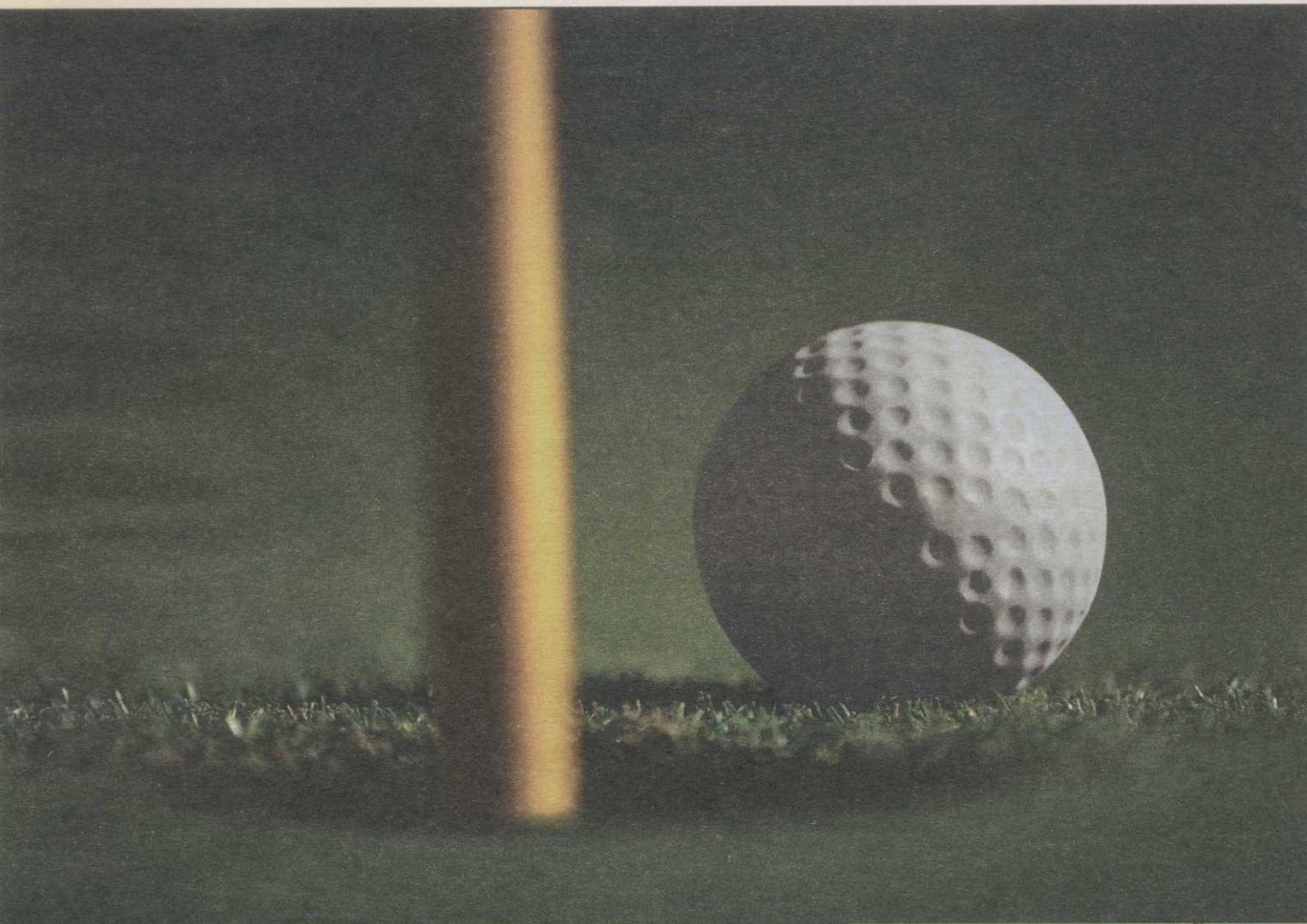
GCN: What is the major attribute you bring to the job of GCSAA president?

Fearis: I consider myself a listener and a communicator. I attribute these two characteristics to two people — Dr. Bill Daniel and Gerry Sweda.

While at Purdue, Dr. Daniel taught me communication skills. When people of importance in the turf world were on campus, Dr. Daniel would call some of the students in to meet and talk with them. You quickly learned when to listen and what questions to ask.

Gerry Sweda was the person who did most of the training when I worked for Scotts. I remember spending one whole day with Gerry on the subject of listening. Listening is a skill and actually takes a lot of practice. Most people hear, but don't listen.

I can listen and communicate the needs and concerns of the membership.



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