

Mobile courses offer up coastal challenge

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MOBILE, Ala. — When the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) last visited New Orleans in 1992 for the International Golf Conference and Show, the GCSAA Golf Championship was held in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., three states away from the convention center.

Traveling to the 2000 tournament will be a tad bit easier for participating superintendents. This year, the tournament will be staged at six courses in the Mobile, Ala., area Feb. 11-15.

The Toro Co. has renewed its sponsorship of the event through the year 2003 and the tournament is expected to attract more than 720 superintendents from across the country and around the world. Practice rounds run Feb. 11-12, the Four-ball championship will be held on Feb. 13, followed by Championship play Feb. 14-15.

Wayne "Chandler" Masters, superintendent at Rio Secco Golf Club in Henderson, Nev., is the defending individual champion and the Chicago-area section of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents is the defending chapter team champion.

The 2000 Tournament will be held at the following courses:

Peninsula Golf and Racquet Club, Scott Clark superintendent

- Yardage — Championship: 7,026 yards, Regular: 6,494, Forward: 5,799

- Terrain — Flat

- Rating/Slope — 73.4/126

- Course Comments — "These greens are huge, they average 6,000 square feet. There is also a fair amount of blind hazards since it is a flat piece of property."

Kiva Dunes Golf Club, Michael Rienzi, superintendent

- Yardage — Championship: 7,092 yards, Regular: 6,464, Forward: 5,849

- Terrain — Coastal Dunes

- Rating/Slope — 73.8/129

- Course Comments — "This is a bump-and-run style course, players will have to use a wide variety of shots."

The Crossings Course at Magnolia Grove,

Layton Overstreet, superintendent

- Yardage — Championship: 7,151 yards, Regular: 6,560, Forward: 5,184

- Terrain — Slightly hilly

- Rating/Slope — 75.6/134

- Course Comments — "These greens are real slopy and you have to watch the breaking speed."

The Falls Course at Magnolia Grove, Layton Overstreet, superintendent

- Yardage — Championship: 7,239 yards, Regular: 6,558, Forward: 5,253

- Terrain — Marshy, undulating

- Rating/Slope — 75.1/137

- Course Comments — "The Falls course is a true tournament golf course. Out of all the courses that they will be playing in the area there is no doubt that this is the big boy."

Cotton Creek at Craft Farms, Kevin Kaehr, superintendent

- Yardage — Championship: 7,028, Regular: 6,581, Middle: 6,032, Forward: 5,175

- Terrain — Flat

- Rating/Slope — 73.9/132

- Course Comments — "The Cotton course is longer and narrower, with a lot of trees on the back nine."

Cypress Bend at Craft Farms, Kevin Kaehr, superintendent

- Yardage — Championship: 6,848, Regular: 6,424, Middle: 5,954, Forward: 5,045

- Terrain — Flat

- Rating/Slope — 73.5/131

- Course Comments — "Cypress is wide open and forgiving, but the greens are a bit bigger and wider. You will have some outlandish putts left if you are not near the pin."

WEATHER

Weather conditions in the Mobile-area in the middle of February can be a hit-or-miss proposition and many courses are situated close to the Gulf of Mexico or Mobile Bay so windy conditions are likely.

"In February there is usually a pretty stiff wind from the north, and that is when things get hard and fast," said superintendent Michael Rienzi at Kiva Dunes Golf Club. "It is usually around 70 degrees during the day, but we could get high winds and a cold snap."

Gulf Shores supers excited about tourney

Continued from page 1

working at the Masters. I'd rather be doing a tournament being watched worldwide on TV than to have all my peers come down and play my golf course."

The tournament, however, will give the superintendents a chance to showcase not only their talents, but also their courses.

"I am more excited than pressured," said Scott Clark, superintendent at Peninsula Golf and Racquet Club. "I am looking forward to showing everyone what we can do."

When the golf championship rolls into town in the middle of February, golfers can expect the six participating layouts here to be in tip-top shape. The courses in the booming Gulf Shores region usually do around one-third of the year's business between late February and late May, when the weather is warm and the humidity is relatively low.

"February is when we try to peak," said Rienzi. "We get the bulk of our play in the spring, so we ought to be in good condition."

Each course will be going through its normal pre-tournament routine prior to the GCSAA event.

Layton Overstreet, superintendent at Magnolia Grove, planned to get busy right after the holidays. "I want to put our best foot forward," said Overstreet. "We will groom it as well as we did for the LPGA

event that we had last October. We'll edge out the bunkers real good and speed up the greens a touch."

Clark will be re-tooling his spring schedule a bit to accommodate the tournament. "We'll mow more often and fertilize a couple of weeks ahead," said Clark. "We've done wall-to-wall overseeding, so it will be greened up nicely."

Fall activities, especially overseeding, have been key to ensuring that the courses look good and are in good shape for the tournament.

"Right now we have caught all the good breaks," said Rienzi. "We had the best overseeding I've ever had this year."

Meanwhile, Kevin Kaehr at Craft Farms is working diligently on winter projects. "We are thinning out some of the trees to get more air movement around greens and we are working on bunker drainage," he said. "We are right on target for February."

Kaehr can't wait until the tournament comes to town. "I am excited because this is a fast-growing area and a lot of people are not aware of what a golfing center Gulf Shores has become," he said.

In February, Kaehr and the rest of his compatriots will have the unique chance to show more than 700 superintendents what golf on the Gulf Shores is all about.

Maples to get USGA Green Section Award

By MARK LESLIE

NEW ORLEANS, La. — Palmer Maples Jr., former president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) and Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association, will receive the USGA Green Section Award during the GCSAA's 71st International Golf Course Conference and Show here in February. Following such past recipients as Drs. James Watson



Palmer Maples

Continued on page 26



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