

## Mobile courses offer up coastal challenge

By ANDREW OVERBECK

**M**OBILE, 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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## Dr. Watschke to get President's Award

NEW ORLEANS — Dr. Thomas L. Watschke, professor of turfgrass science at Penn State University, will receive the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) 2000 President's Award for Environmental Leadership. The award will be presented by GCSAA President Dave Fearis

at the 8:45 a.m. Golf General Session, Feb. 18, at GCSAA's 71st International Golf Course Conference and Show here.

The President's Award 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." The GCSAA board of directors selected Watschke on the basis of his research and education in the area of golf and the environment.

In 1985 Watschke established runoff facilities that provided some of the first scientific research showing the positive ef-

fects of healthy turfgrass on the environment. He developed numerous Integrated Pest Management programs for golf courses and developed the world's first undergraduate turfgrass degree program.

He has been a vocal advocate for the environmental benefits of golf courses through promotion of IPM and Best Management Practices and through his comparisons of golf courses with

other land uses. He has been interviewed twice for CBS Morning News regarding healthy turf.

Watschke worked as a superintendent before completing his doctorate.

"Dr. Watschke is a most deserving recipient of this major award," Fearis said. "His research, education and continuing public support have contributed to an enduring legacy of environmental excellence."

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## Maples honored

Continued from page 25

and B.J. Johnson and famed superintendent Chet Mendenhall, Maples will be given the award during the U.S. Golf Association's annual general session, Feb. 19.

"To get that award is as meaningful as any you could get," Maples said from his home in Lawrenceville, Ga., where he is semi-retired and working as an agronomic consultant. "It is a crowning accomplishment. I will receive it for the Maples family. I feel my extended family has contributed to golf a little bit. We've been blessed by being in the golf industry."

Asked what he thought was his personal major accomplishment, Maples said: "I would hope that [the selection committee] looked at my feeling of sharing ideas that you've developed and that have worked for you; and my continuing reminder to never think you know it all. There is always education out there that you need. When you're looking down a long narrow path, the more steps you take the wider that path gets. Every time we learn one thing we find out there are maybe 100 other things we don't know."

Maples served as president of the GCSAA in 1975, when he was presented its Distinguished Service Award, then was director of education from 1976-80. He retired on June 22, 1998, after 16 years at Summit Chase Country Club here.

The University of Georgia graduate worked as assistant and head superintendent at Charlotte (N.C.) Country Club for 11 years, then took the superintendent job at The Standard Club in Duluth, Ga., in 1970.

He is a member of the GCSAA Historical Committee and the Donald Ross Society.

The Maples family has included Frank (construction superintendent and greenkeeper at Pinehurst Resort for 48 years who died in 1949); Angus (superintendent at Pine Needles Golf Club who died in 1958); Palmer Maples Sr., (a golf professional who died in 1979); golf course architects Ellis (who died in 1984) and Dan Maples; superintendents Gene, Wayne and Joe; and golf professional Willie.