

By Ben Chlevin

Executive Director
Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America

The Certified Superintendent

The Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America has produced a long-awaited certification program. The association's executive director explains the program and its implications for the future of the superintendent in terms of job security, image and hiring practices

On June 14, 1971, the June Newsletter of the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America announced the implementation of the long-awaited Certification Program and invited eligible members to request official application forms. Less than one month later over 450 requests had come into GCSAA headquarters, and at a time when most superintendents are too busy to read their mail!

That is one indication of the interest that has been generated among the men responsible for the maintenance of the world's top golf playing surfaces ever since a committee was formed two years ago to investigate the feasibility and format of a workable certification program for GCSAA members.

The first problem facing this committee was to define the purpose and goals of a certification program for superintendents. The second and equally difficult task: Design a practical procedure by which the purpose and goals might be achieved.

The committee agreed that the principal aim of any certification program must be to provide a yardstick by which the capabilities and qualifications of superintendents could be measured, and that the measurements could only be set by a superintendent's peers, his fellow superintendents. The committee also agreed that any certification program must be professionally organized and administered as a long-range, institutional effort, because only then could full support from the membership be expected. Finally, it was recognized that a certification program for superintendents must have its base in an individually written examination, covering all important aspects of the golf course superintendent's position.

Six-part examination

The examination for certification consists of six parts, which reflect the major areas of knowledge and skills required of a superintendent. They are: 1. Knowledge of the GCSAA, including history, purpose and ethics and the profession of golf course superintendency; 2. Knowledge of the game of golf, including the official rules of golf; 3. Agronomic



procedures (no reference materials will be provided to cover this section, except tables and formulas to assist in working out practical problems); 4. Pesticides—comprehensive questions on the selection, usage, safety precautions and limitations of contemporary plant protectant chemicals will be included. This will indicate to local, state or Federal pest control licensing agencies that the superintendent who passes this examination is fully proficient and capable of handling and supervising the use of such materials; 5. Business administration—techniques of record-keeping and application of such information, budget preparation and presentation; 6. Management—people relationships, recruiting, training, supervising crews, public relations (officials, members, club department heads and community).

There will be no time limit set on any one of the six parts of the examination except that a maximum of six hours will be allowed for the completion of all parts of the examination and all in the same day. Each part will be graded individually and a passing grade is required in each. Failure to pass one or more parts will require re-examination only in those failed parts. There is no limit on the number of times a candidate can request re-examination on the parts failed initially, but if the failed parts are not successfully completed within one year of the original examination date, the candidate will be required to repeat the entire examination and will be required to pay an additional fee.

Application and eligibility

The title Certified Golf Course Superintendent will be conferred on those GCSAA members who apply for and successfully complete the official examination. Each will receive a certificate, a wallet card and the right to place the designation CGCS after his name in official correspondence. The title does not constitute another GCSAA membership classification. It amounts to a voluntary professional assessment through a service made available by the association to the membership.

Who is eligible? All Class A members of GCSAA, who have held that classification for three years and who have been employed as golf course superintendents for an equal number of years.

In addition, those GCSAA members who have held Class A status for 20 years or more and who have been employed as superintendents for that many years, will be certified without examination if they apply in writing before September 1, 1973. Members applying under this "tenure and experience" provision of the program need not fulfill the re-examination requirement after five years if they are over 55 years of age at the time they apply for certification.

Application for certification must be made on official forms available from GCSAA headquarters at 3158 Des Plaines Ave., Des Plaines, Ill. 60018. Forms must be completely filled out and must be accompanied by the processing fee. If the applicant is found to be ineligible, the fee will be returned. If the application is approved, the applicant will be notified, and all reference materials, contained in a kit, will be sent to him for pre-examination study.

Some individuals have indicated a reluctance to apply, fearing ridicule if they fail the examination. Others have expressed determination to apply regardless of the result the first time around, because they want to be counted among those striving for professionalism and want to know where they stand now. Applications and examination papers will be coded to maintain confidentiality, and for those who wish to keep their bid for certification secret if unsuccessful, private monitored examinations will be arranged.

Examination procedure

Each applicant may take as long as he likes to prepare for the examination after he has received his study materials, which cover every question asked in the six-part examination. When the applicant indicates he is ready, a date mutually agreeable to him and to an official monitor in his area will be set. The examination, identified with the code number assigned the applicant, will then be sent to the monitor in a sealed packet. The packet will be opened only in the presence of the applicant and when the examination is completed, it will be re-sealed in the presence of the applicant and mailed back to GCSAA headquarters.

At the same time the examination material is sent to the monitor, the applicant will receive a notification about it. He must present this letter to the monitor to receive his examination papers. The letter will also contain examples of questions to be used in the examination so that the applicant will have some idea of what to expect. Because this will be an open book examination, applicants can refer to any of the pre-examination study material sent to them during the actual examination.

Certification goals

The primary goal of the certification program is professional recognition of the superintendent. A certified superintendent will have achieved status through recognition by his peers. The process of examination and its content will alert club officials, golf course operators, club managers, golf professionals and golfers to the exact nature and extent of the superintendent's professional qualifications.

The examination, as prepared by GCSAA Director of Education, Dr. Paul Alexander, under the supervision and field testing of the Certification Committee and the GCSAA

Executive Committee, constitutes a definition of the superintendent which has never before been available. This definition will promote greater career stability for the superintendent, certified or otherwise, because it will provide a common ground of understanding between superintendent and employer with recognized standards of performance and responsibility.

The Certification Committee has emphasized that the program will be continuously updated to reflect new discoveries in research, new equipment development, new techniques in managing money, men and materials, as they evolve. The program, therefore, will furnish continuing incentive for self-improvement by individual golf course superintendents.

One of the important effects of a certification program is the expected increase in the number of young men who will become attracted to the profession through this promise of recognition and measurement of achievement.

Equally important to the superintendent, certified or otherwise, is that with the function and responsibilities of the golf superintendent defined, the superintendent's job can now be compared in relation to other jobs at the club on the basis of job requirement instead of "what the traffic will bear." Golf course superintendents for many years have been paid less than the chef or chief bartender at their clubs. Often this is due to lack of understanding by club officials as to what the superintendent's job requires.

Today the measure of a superintendent is based on his local reputation. When he leaves his area to apply for or to take another job, the prospective employer has no way of evaluating his potential. Certification will set par for the superintendent and the club that will be recognized and measurable wherever he goes. However, as in the case of the golfer and the handicap system, the certified superintendent must still perform.

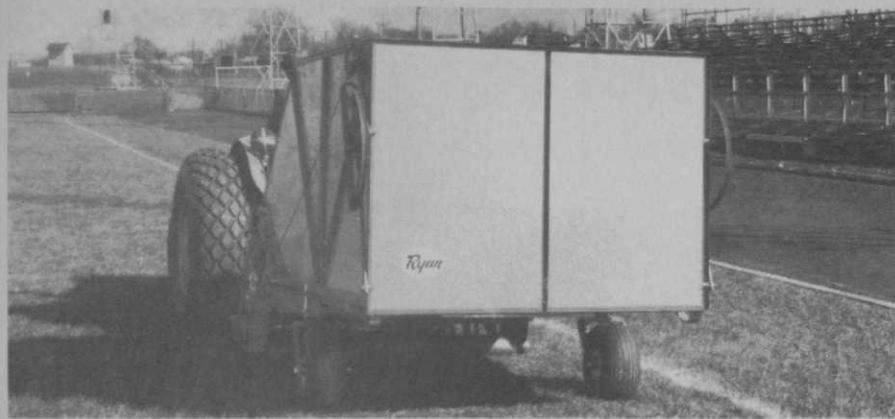
No guarantee

Certification will present no guarantees to the superintendent or the club employing him of the standard of performance to be delivered. Certification will indicate the level above which an individually certified superintendent can be expected to perform, providing other elements of the job—relationship with club officials and members, budgetary support, effective communications with other department heads—have been effectively established. It will also form a much sounder basis for a club-superintendent relationship than has been possible for many superintendents and clubs.

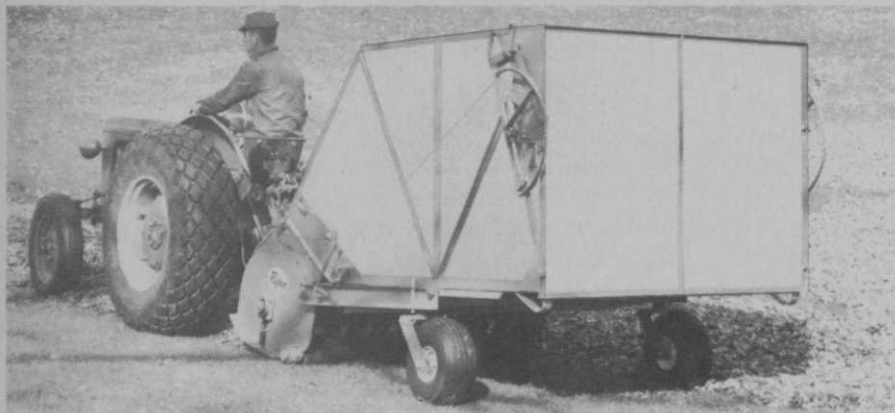
Re-examination requirement

Because GCSAA certification is designed to reflect a superintendent's professional qualifications and his ability to function as a superintendent under current acceptable technology, the certified golf course superintendent will be required to take a re-examination within five years of being certified. In addition, he must remain a GCSAA member and remain actively employed as a golf course superintendent. He must also complete one regional GCSAA workshop (initiated this year) or successfully complete a GCSAA-approved correspondence study course. (The only correspondence course in turf management currently approved by GCSAA is offered by the University of Guelph, Guelph, Ont., Canada.)

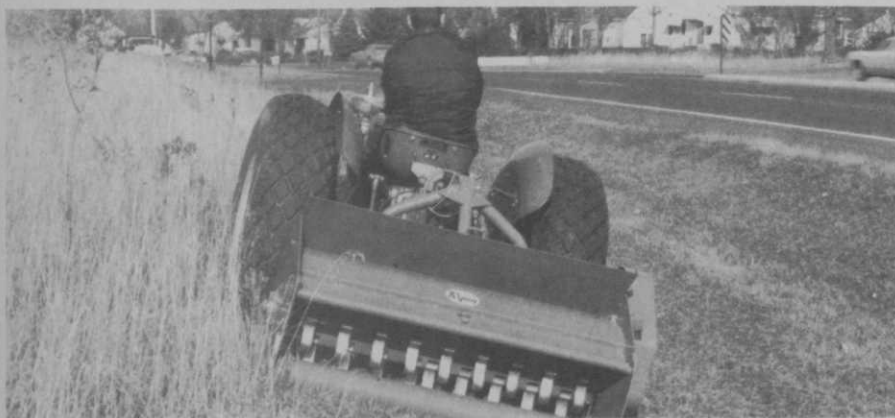
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Also, if a certified member leaves the profession for more than five years and then returns, he will be required to start over in the examination program—regardless of the number of examination requirements previously met. If he is away less than five years, such time will be added to the re-examination requirement (five years, plus years withdrawn, from last examination date).

Certification cost

The certification fee for a regular member is \$50, which covers the cost of all reference material, examination, the certificate, the wallet card and the publicity effort generated by headquarters on behalf of the member (with his consent). Members applying under the "tenure and experience" provision before September 1, 1973, are not required to take the examination. Their certification fee will be \$25. GCSAA members presently not eligible for certification, but interested in reviewing the requirements and in preparing themselves in advance of their eligibility, may purchase the reference material kit for \$25. All checks should be made out to GCSAA-Certification Program.

The Certification Committee emphasizes that the program will change with changing conditions and as the profession of golf course superintendency changes. Such flexibility is one of the basic strengths of the program and will assure GCSAA members and their employers the common meeting ground of understanding that will result in better superintendents, better golf courses and happier golfers. □

GCSAA annual convention

The **Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America's** annual conference will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio, February 13 to 18, 1972.

Headquarters for the convention will be the Netherland-Hilton Hotel. Exhibits will be displayed at the Cincinnati Convention and Exposition Center, one block from the hotel.

Manufacturers interested in exhibiting for the show should contact GCSAA headquarters at: 3158 Des Plaines Ave., Des Plaines, Ill. 60018.