

For What

Golf pros and superintendents must work together for a golf course to succeed. Jealousy, however, can easily scuttle their cooperation, and nothing spurs envy more than money.

Superintendents look at the extra revenues some pros get — range fees, lesson income, company cars and profit sharing, to name a few — and wonder where the money is for them.

“Superintendents aren’t looking to be highway robbers,” says Clark Rowles, superintendent at Nakoma GC in Madison, Wis. “We’re just looking for compensation to be fair for everyone.”

While older superintendents remember the days when pros lived the high life while superintendents toiled for pittance, today’s numbers reflect a slightly different story. Most superintendents make more in base salary than pros and some of the traditional perks of pros have disappeared, according to the National Golf Foundation’s 1999 U.S. Golf Facility Compensation Study. But pros still garner more additional income than superintendents, and the only way superintendents can narrow the gap further is to research what additional compensation pros receive and demand their fair share from owners, insiders say.

Troy Alderson, superintendent at Kah-Nee-Tah Resort GC in Warm Springs, Ore., says he wanted to educate his owners about what industry standards were for overall superintendent compensation. While his salary at the club was good, the benefits didn’t match what Alderson knew others in the industry received. So he contacted the GCSAA and talked to other superintendents about what benefits he should expect. Armed with that information, he went to the owners to request what he felt he deserved.

“Club officials were behind the times,” Alderson says. “They’d never been asked to do anything for the superintendent, so they never did. Sometimes, you just have to ask.”

Continued on page 24

Going For The Green



COMPENSATION

You're Worth

Here's what superintendents must know if they want their compensation to measure up to the pros

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., ASSOCIATE EDITOR

PRO VS. SUPERINTENDENT

Base Salaries (Median)

	Superintendent	Professional
Municipal (U.S.)	\$44,500	\$38,900
Daily Fee (U.S.)	\$43,300	\$34,800
Private (U.S.)	\$58,100	\$42,200

INSURANCE BENEFITS

Insurance Paid By Facility (Percentage Receiving Coverage)

	Health	Life	Business	Dental
Municipal (U.S.)				
Pros	80.3%	64.5%	7.9%	61.2%
Superintendents	73.5%	59.7%	6.6%	58.2%
Daily Fee (U.S.)				
Pros	75.3%	39.4%	8.8%	32.7%
Superintendents	70.2%	37.5%	7.5%	30.2%
Private (U.S.)				
Pros	80.8%	54.7%	5.7%	40.6%
Superintendents	78.8%	54.6%	4.1%	38.9%

ADDITIONAL INCOME

	Lessons	Association Dues	Education Allowance	Percentage of Car Rental Fees	Percentage of Green/Guest Fees	Bonus
Municipal (U.S.)						
Pros	89.5%	59.2%	52.6%	17.1%	8.6%	21.7%
Superintendents	N/A	46.4%	46.4%	N/A	N/A	18.9%
Daily Fee (U.S.)						
Pros	86.2%	64.9%	55.9%	5.9%	3.5%	52.4%
Superintendents	1.3%	48.1%	39.0%	N/A	N/A	45.4%
Private (U.S.)						
Pros	93.1%	69.5%	61.9%	19.5%	12.3%	59.7%
Superintendents	N/A	56.5%	49.2%	N/A	N/A	51.1%

* Percentage of survey respondents who receive additional money from these sources. N/A = Not Applicable

For What You're Worth

OTHER BENEFITS

	Paid Vacation	Profit-Sharing	Annuity/Retirement	401K/Pension
Municipal (U.S.)				
Pros	70.4%	6.6%	48.7%	29.6%
Superintendents	69.9%	2.6%	44.9%	27.6%
Daily Fee (U.S.)				
Pros	71.8%	14.1%	12.5%	35.5%
Superintendents	69.2%	11.2%	10.2%	30.4%
Private (U.S.)				
Pros	77.4%	8.5%	15.1%	38.4%
Superintendents	78.8%	7.6%	15.5%	41.3%

SOURCE: NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION'S 1999 U.S. GOLF FACILITY EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION STUDY

Continued from page 22

Steve Rodgers, pro at The Quechee Club in Quechee, Vt., says that while superintendents should be compensated equally to pros, negotiating ability has a lot to do with how much superintendents receive.

"You may have a green thumb and be able to grow grass on concrete, but that won't mat-

ter if you don't know how to negotiate a good contract," Rodgers says. "Superintendents should be compensated the same way as pros, but superintendents have to know how to get what they want."

Upward trend

According to GCSAA, a survey of 3,527 of its members showed that superintendents' average salaries rose from \$44,500 in 1993 to \$57,057 this year. That's a significant increase, so squeezing extra pennies from owners for benefits like pensions and health insurance isn't easy.

Cathy Hut, senior manager of employee programs for GCSAA, says it's hard to generalize about compensation packages because they vary by region. Superintendents in Florida and California may command higher compensation than superintendents in other regions, she says. But most U.S. superintendents are seeing annual raises in the 3 percent to 4 percent range. "The golf course maintenance market has kept pace with overall national employment trends, in terms of pay raises, since 1995," Hut says.

Hut also advises superintendents to think creatively when negotiating compensation packages. Signing bonuses, housing allowances and company cars provide alternative compensation options. Hut says only 42 percent of superintendents had a pension or 401(k) plan for retirement in 1999. Setting up a 401(k) can be complicated, and many golf courses don't have the staff to manage them, she says.

To overcome this barrier, GCSAA joined the Club Managers Association of America and the

Continued on page 27

Are Assistants Keeping Up?

Assistant superintendents' salaries have risen in tandem with superintendents' salaries. According to the GCSAA, assistant superintendents' average base salary rose to \$29,638 in 2000 from \$27,981 in 1998, representing a 6 percent increase. In addition, 77 percent of assistants are now salaried instead of hourly.

But Lori Moser, assistant superintendent at Cherry Hills CC in Englewood, Colo., says she's concerned with the salary expectations of students coming out of school.

"There are a lot of people coming out of school who have completely unrealistic expectations of what they'll receive in their first jobs," Moser says. "A lot of students think they're going to be superintendents immediately."

Moser says turf schools have to do a better job of explaining what salaries students can expect in their first jobs. Doug Petersan, superintendent at Austin GC in Austin, Texas, agrees.

"There are a lot of kids coming out of school today who look at assistant jobs as glorified internships before they move on to more money as head superintendent," Petersan says, adding that students just out of school often take less money than an established superintendent would just to get the title.

John Warner, assistant superintendent at New Orleans CC in New Orleans, says students should be patient and learn as much as they can in their first job.

"Experience has a lot to do with what you will make in the future," Warner says. "I understood that was part of the deal when I got into this business. I'm looking forward to making more money in the future, but until then I'm going to learn all I can."



John Warner: Experience eventually pays

For What You're Worth

Continued from page 24

PGA to create a program called Golf Retirement Plus (see sidebar, page 28). The plan offers employers the opportunity to reward these employees with retirement benefits without breaking the bank.

"If you're a small business owner, it's not easy to offer benefits, but this program gives you the opportunity to reward the three key employees that make your course a success," Hut says. "Superintendents should let their employers know the program is available."

Even playing field

Most superintendents acknowledge their base salaries are more than most pros, but they also know pros have more opportunities to supplement their incomes.

Greg McDaniel, superintendent at Sage Meadows GC in Jonesboro, Ark., says his base salary is 30 percent more than his pro's, but those differences are negligible because the pro gets lesson revenue and participates in profit-sharing. But McDaniel admits he wouldn't want the pro's job because of the added stress of dealing with owner expectations and demanding golfers. "Still, I'd like to have some of the financial opportunities he has," McDaniel says.

Cary Splane, pro at Gainesville CC in Gainesville, Fla., says most pros' deals aren't as lucrative as they seem. Many of a pro's benefits are based on overall club performance. In Splane's experience, superintendents make a better base salary

"You're duking it out with God every day. I don't begrudge [superintendents] any money they make because they earn every penny."

— ALYN STANTON, PRO, CLUB WEST GC, PHOENIX

than most pros and their compensation doesn't fluctuate. If the club has a bad year, the superintendent gets paid the same as in a good year, he says. The pro doesn't have that kind of security.

"Contrary to popular belief, we don't make that much money," Splane says. "If there's a couple of months of bad weather and the club does poorly, a pro must adjust his expectations about the amount of money he's going to receive."

Alyn Stanton, pro at Club West GC in Phoenix, says superintendents operate under a lot of stress and should be compensated accordingly.

"Being a superintendent is one of the most ulcer-inducing jobs out there," Stanton says. "You're duking it out with God every day. I don't begrudge them any money they make because they earn every penny."

More face time

A higher profile at a club solidifies the bargaining position of a superintendent who wants ad-

Continued on page 28

Payback Time

Have you ever dreamed of structuring the compensation package of your course's pro? Wouldn't you love to have the pro's salary depend on whether he or she stays in *your* good graces? It's not a fantasy many superintendents get to experience, but for K. Clark Rowles, superintendent at Nakoma GC in Madison, Wis., it came true.

Rowles joined Nakoma in 1996 when the club, founded in 1944, upgraded its facilities. The club had recently finished a \$4 million renovation to the clubhouse (including the pro shop) and was planning a \$1.2 million renovation to the course. While Rowles enjoyed overseeing the course renovation, the other changes didn't sit well with the pro, who had been at the club for 35 years.

"He came to me and said, 'This is the way I've been doing things for 35 years, and if they don't like it, perhaps it's time for me to move on,'" Rowles says. "He was near retirement anyway, so the club worked out a severance package for him. Unfortunately, that left us without a pro."

With the old professional gone, the club reassessed how to pay its new pro, and Rowles wanted to be part of the process. Rowles pointed out to the general manager that the old contract awarded the pro money from the pro shop, driving range, car rentals, lessons and refurbished balls that the pro recovered from the club's lakes (the club bought them for range balls). The extra compensation totaled more than \$150,000 per year without the salary.

"We agreed that when we brought in

the new person, the club would control more of those revenues," Rowles says. "We would offer a salary comparable to other pros in the market, but without some of the extras."

When Nakoma advertised the position, 60 applicants interviewed for the job. Rowles participated in every step of the hire. When the day came to hire a pro, Rowles knew what the pro was making and how the package was structured.

Rowles advises superintendents to ask their general managers to sit in on interviews with prospective pros. That way, no one enters the process without a clear understanding of each other's goals.

"It's a two-way street," Rowles says. "I've had interviews where the pro sat in. Why shouldn't superintendents be accorded the same courtesy?"

For What You're Worth

Continued from page 27

ditional compensation. Gale Hultquist, superintendent at Wanakah CC in Hamburg, N.Y., says pros are the first people that golfers see as they begin their rounds. In contrast, they rarely see superintendents. It's up to superintendents to make themselves available to the golfers, Hultquist says. He urges them to get involved in their

communities as well as their clubs.

"Golfers want to be seen with people who are movers and shakers," Hultquist says. "The higher your profile, the higher your perceived value to the club."

Some superintendents say their colleagues shouldn't worry about what pros make. Michael Huey, superintendent at Waverly Woods CC in Ellicott City, Md.,



Gale Hultquist, superintendent at Wanakah CC in Hamburg, N.Y., says his peers must raise their profiles to improve their financial position.

says that instead of comparing salaries with the pro, superintendents should concentrate on being compensated equally with their peers.

"I don't know what my pro makes and I'm not concerned about it," Huey says. "I'm fairly compensated when I compare myself with other superintendents in the area, so I'm happy."

Walter Lankau, owner of Stow CC in Stow, Mass., agrees.

"Superintendents have to understand that they're not competing with pros," Lankau says. "I work hard to avoid any competition between the two because my business can't operate if they don't work together." ■

**NEW IN
2000**

F I V E

GREAT REASONS WHY
YOU SHOULD CONSIDER
BULL'S EYE Bermuda
FOR YOUR NEXT
PROJECT.

- Virtually No Seedheads
- Good Shade Tolerance
- Deep Blue-Green Color
- Medium-Wide Blade For Texture Contrast
- Can Be Mowed With Rotary or Reel



BULL'S-EYE
Bermuda

**WEST COAST
TURF**

Life is Short. Sod It!

www.westcoastturf.com 760/360-5464 800/447-1840 FAX: 760/360-5616

Reaching Retirement

The GCSAA, the PGA and the Club Managers Association of America teamed in 1999 to create Golf Retirement Plus, a program designed to help clubs offer pros, managers and superintendents retirement plans.

Under the program, employees and employers make contributions to an individual account through Golf Retirement Plus representatives, who manage it based on assessments of individual needs. The accounts are overseen by Topeka, Kan.-based Security Benefit Life Insurance Co. The advantages provided by the plan include:

- deferred tax payments;
- portability (meaning that you won't lose your benefits if you change jobs);
- ease of transfer of money into the program from other funds;
- guaranteed death benefits; and
- guaranteed income options upon retirement.

SOURCE: GCSAA