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Circle No. 152 on Reader Inquiry Card

are signed and the capacity of the multi-course operator to expand.

Starting in L.A.

In 1960, Zeke Avila, then superintendent of Hacienda Golf Club in Mission Viejo, CA, signed a contract to maintain Arcadia Golf Course, a municipal course in Arcadia, CA. The next year he quit his job at Hacienda and started looking for more courses to maintain.

Twenty years before, Avila entered golf course management as part of the crew at Lakeside Country Club in Whittier, CA. For \$65 per month he worked six days per week and every other Sunday learning how to maintain a golf course. He reflects, "The golf professional was in business for himself but not the superintendent. I believed I could work out something like the pro."

Today, Avila operates ten golf courses in Los Angeles and Palm Springs grossing more than \$2.5 million per year. He is considered



Zeke Avila, the father of contract management.

the father of contract golf course management.

If Avila is the father of contract golf course maintenance, then David Price is the dean. Price, a property lawyer for Getty Oil in

Los Angeles, recognized the opportunity in golf club management in 1970. He negotiated a lease for Westchester Golf Club in Los Angeles and hired Richard Bermudez as superintendent. With Bermudez, assistant Vicki Higgins, and civil engineer Sandy Burns, Price carefully built California Golf-Tennis. Now called American Golf Corp., Price's company operates 50 golf courses from California to New York. He recently negotiated a lease for six municipal courses in four boroughs of New York City.

The largest single owner of golf courses is Club Corporation of America (CCA) in Dallas, TX. CCA was founded by attorney Robert Dedman in 1957 and today operates more than 90 golf courses and 30 city clubs, including Firestone and Inverrary.

James Faubion is director of golf operations for CCA. Seven regional superintendents report to him. "I function mainly as a consultant to our superinten-

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dents, not someone who tells them how to run their courses," Faubion said.

CCA owns most courses and operates each as its own profit center. Central purchasing of some equipment and supplies makes CCA a big factor in the golf course market from a manufacturer's viewpoint.

Jack Nicklaus's companies design, operate, and consult many golf courses, including Muirfield Village in Dublin, OH, and St. Andrews in Hasting-on-Hudson, NY. Edward Epcells is president of Golf Turf Inc., a subsidiary of Jack Nicklaus Cos., North Palm Beach, FL. Golf Turf Inc. consults 34 courses on agronomics and maintenance operations. Jack Nicklaus Club Management, established originally to consult on clubhouse operations, has expanded into total club management under contract.

Environmental Industries of Calabassas, CA, a multi-million dollar landscaping company is

exploring golf maintenance contracting as part of its services to municipalities. ChemLawn made a stab at golf course maintenance in the mid-70's but retreated to concentrate on its primary customer, the homeowner. Certainly, ChemLawn has the technical resources to expand into golf course operation by adding knowledgeable superintendents to handle management.

Multi-course advantages

Operating a golf course can be a business separate from ownership. It was this discovery that opened the field to rapid growth. Contract maintenance or operation relieves the owner, often a group of investors or municipality, of operational headaches. This is generally done by either a lease or contract for services.

The keys to contract operation are agronomic and business expertise, better control of labor, and discounts from volume buying.

Contract golf maintenance has its critics, often other superintendents who suspect contract operators lower standards to make a profit. And, since contract maintenance is often utilized to solve union problems, a scab image persists.

When American Golf Corp. leases a course, it is taking a risk. Since its income is based upon greens fees it can't afford to let the course scare away golfers.

Certainly Jack Nicklaus doesn't want his name associated with poor maintenance. He designs many of the courses his Golf Turf Inc. advises. His customers want the prestige of the Nicklaus name for their courses and are willing to pay for it. Real estate developers can attract more investors when the project is associated with Nicklaus.

When a company specializes in managing golf courses it learns the tricks to efficient operation, tricks a single superintendent may not know, especially if he has

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- Convenient sales and service centers all over North America.

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- Attaches to PTO of tractor.
- 24" diameter tubing available in 100 ft. lengths.

*rated at 100 hp.

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Vermeer LM-35 Plow

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- 35 hp Deutz diesel engine.
- Hydraulic steering and propel.
- Just 35½" wide.

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Circle No. 163

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A New Generation

always worked for courses where money is not an issue.

As golf becomes more a business and less a game for the wealthy, operational efficiency becomes more important. Most new courses are resort courses run as investments in recreation, a profitable option for today's investors.

Men like Avila and Price have discovered investors aren't the

only ones who can make a profit. So can the operators. They realize they can move equipment and crews from course to course when necessary. They know they have clout with suppliers when buying for ten courses instead of one. These savings alone can represent a reasonable profit without changing maintenance practices.

"One of my men works as hard as three municipal workers," says

Avila. "He is given specific responsibilities and takes pride in his work or he answers to me. He is also directly responsible for the equipment he uses so there is no one to blame for breakdowns except himself. If a breakdown does occur, we can get a replacement machine to his course within two hours."

"The municipality or owners have the assurance that if one of our men burns a green," Avila states, "our \$1 million insurance will cover it. We can't afford disappointed golfers any more than the owner can. Owners negotiate with me, not a union. I take care of all fringes and labor disputes. We work with the owner to establish a definite set of specifications for maintenance and operation."


Mike Heacock, one of three regional super-superintendents for American Golf Corp., was an opponent of the multi-course management concept before he left Lakeside Country Club to join AGC. "I expressed my opinion to Bob Williams, president of AGC," says Heacock, "and instead of throwing me out of his office, he hired me to correct my concerns." Heacock is responsible for 17 courses in southern California. Ken Sakai is in charge of four courses in northern California, and Richard Bermudez handles the rest. Bermudez recently hired John DeMatto from Pinehurst to run the six New York City courses.

AGC leases its equipment instead of buying it. Due to its size, AGC was able to negotiate a financing package with Litton Industries to buy Toro equipment and Textron to buy Jacobsen equipment. This reduces the financial exposure of the company to approximately the length of its golf course leases. It also makes AGC a national customer instead of a regional customer.

"Capital improvements to a course," says Heacock, "are either deducted from the lease or built into the greens fee. This gives the municipality, which generally just wants to break even, a chance to improve its course without going to the voters for a bond

continued on page 84

PRO'S RELY ON PRO'S


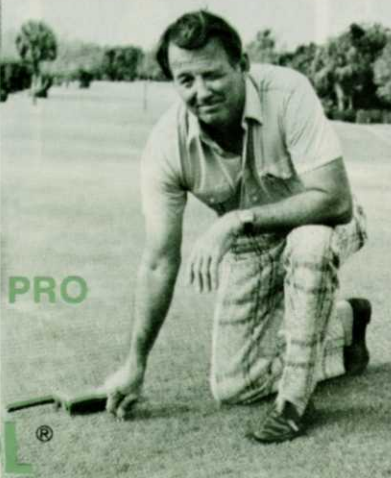


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Mr. Dub Pagan, Golf Professional
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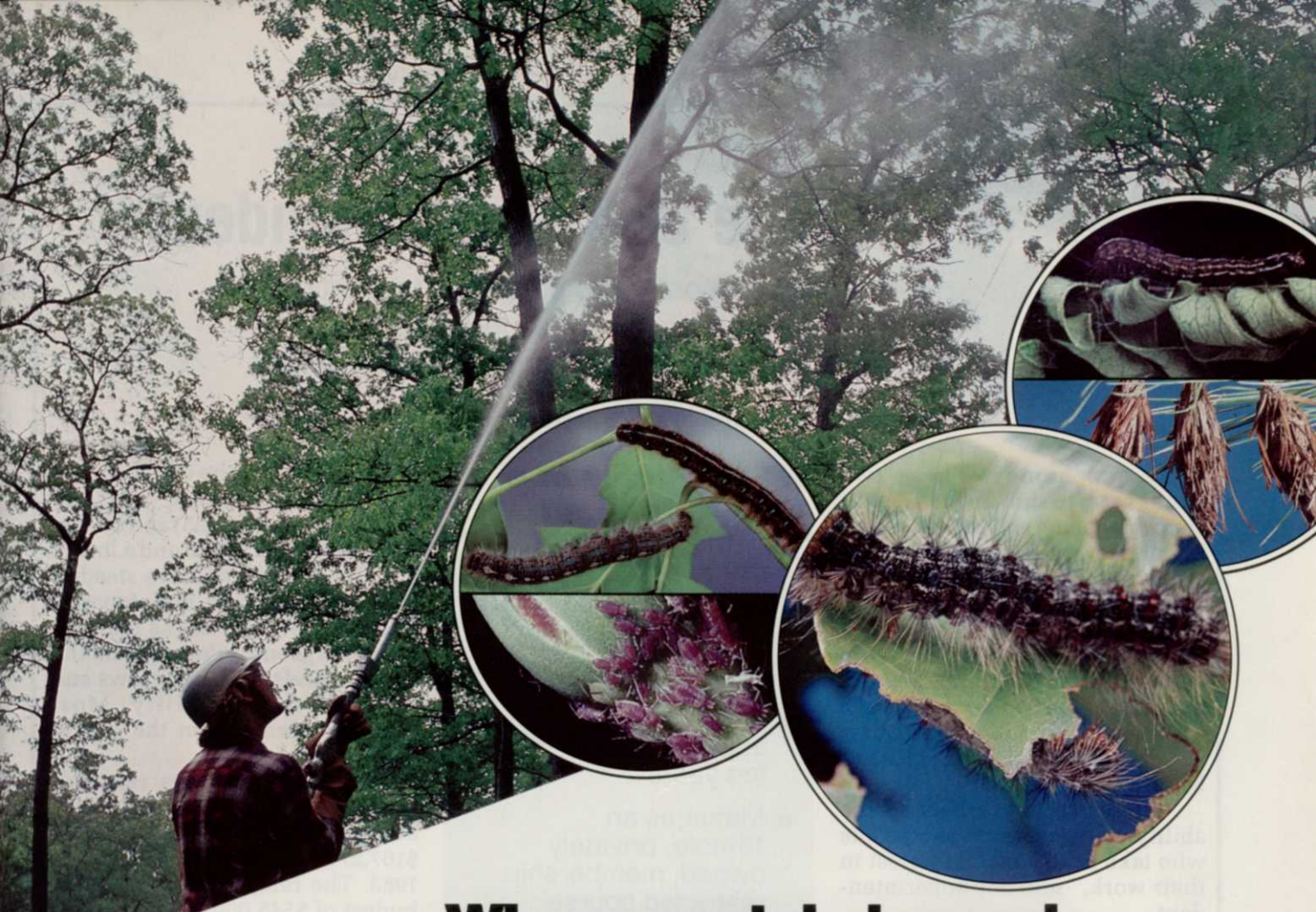
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Circle No. 106 on Reader Inquiry Card

The Golf Superintendent

Time, money and personnel present greater problems to today's superintendent than anything Mother Nature can dish out.

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor

Time and money. Those two words seem to sum up the greatest concerns facing golf course superintendents across the country.

In an informal survey conducted by WEEDS TREES & TURF, declining budgets and increasing expectations from boards of directors and golfers and an increasing work load, have done more to hobble golf course superintendents than Mother Nature ever could.

"What I've found hard is the ability to hire competent people who take pride and an interest in their work," said one superintendent.

"I think everyone is interested in providing a quality product at minimal cost," said another, "but more and more members are wanting more, but aren't willing to pay for it."

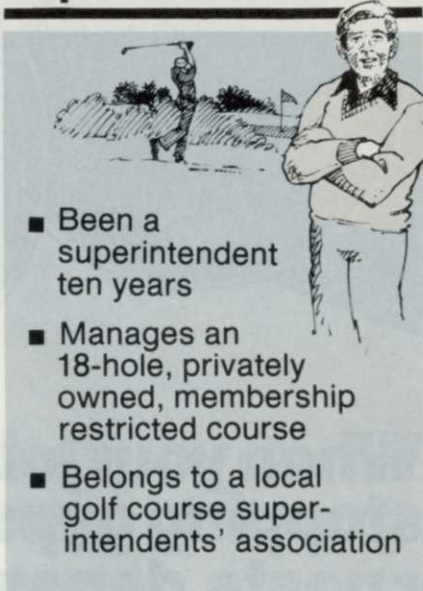
A little more than half of the respondents have a planned replacement program for their equipment.

Yet another Midwestern golf course superintendent agreed.

"Our biggest problem is coming up with adequate funding to accomplish the standards demanded by the management and golf patron. We want to satisfy the golfer, but in the long run, do what's best for the course."

Survey results show the WEEDS TREES & TURF respondents to have, on the average, 10 years experience as a superintendent and managing a privately-

WT&T Profile of a Superintendent



- Been a superintendent ten years
- Manages an 18-hole, privately owned, membership restricted course
- Belongs to a local golf course superintendents' association

owned, membership restricted 18-hole course. Eighty-seven percent are members of local golf course superintendents' associations with 66 percent of those surveyed members of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Typical Annual Budget

- Herbicides _____ \$2,396
- Fertilizers _____ \$11,245
- Fungicides _____ \$7,985
- Seed renovation/establishment \$1,735
- Seed for winter overseeding _____ \$2,933



Greens fees at the courses averaged \$6 for nine holes (a high of \$18 and a low of \$3.25) and \$13 for 18 holes (a high of \$50 and a low of \$5). Rounds played have steadily increased, as have maintenance budgets, however not as much to offset burgeoning demands on the superintendent's time, crews and areas of responsibility. Most responses came from the South, Midwest and East.

In 1981 the average respondent's maintenance budget was around \$150,000, jumping to \$167,277 in 1982 and \$183,568 in 1983. The range was from a high budget of \$545,000 for one course to a low of \$21,000 for another.

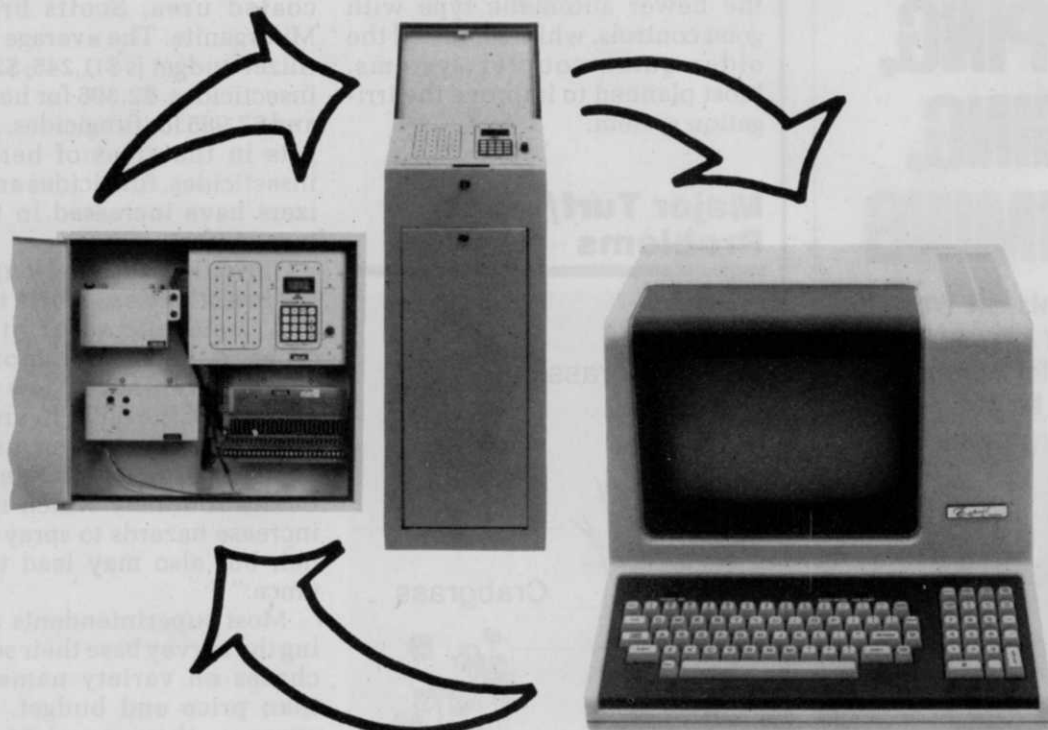
Equipment

A little more than half of the respondents have a planned replacement program for their equipment. A vast majority preferred hydraulic to mechanical drive mowers. Ninety six percent serviced and repaired their own equipment.

In the golf cart area, most superintendents were not involved in the concession with

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The Buckner Central Controller, VC-600, combines a quality video terminal with a computer software package specially designed by irrigation experts for watering large commercial projects, parks, schools, golf courses and large residential areas. The video screen displays simple, easy-to-understand question and answer programming for your review. Fast changes and additions can be made at the video terminal or at any of the field controllers.

This system sends other irrigation controllers to the back of the class. The cost is amazingly low for the versatility it delivers. It is an easy "add-on" system. Start with field units and add the central unit later. Plan ahead, but start right away!

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only a little less than 5 percent maintaining the golf cars. Courses averaged 40 cars with E-Z-Go the preferred manufacturer.

There was almost an even split of those who delayed purchasing turf equipment the past two years and those who didn't.

None of the respondents picked up grass clippings on fairways.

Irrigation systems were mainly the newer automatic type with good controls, while some had the older quick-coupler systems. Most planned to improve the irrigation system.

Major Turf/Weed Problems

Goosegrass



Crabgrass

Clover



Dandelions

Plantains



Weeds, trees & insects

While weather presents a perennial problem to the golf course superintendent, dandelions, crabgrass and clover add to the natural problems he must contend with. Grubs, sod webworms, cutworms and armyworms, are the most troublesome and fre-

quently-cited turf pests. Japanese beetles, scales and webworms are the three most bothersome tree and shrub insects.

Chemicals

A majority of superintendents prefer liquid concentrates in the chemical formulations they use. A majority used IBDU (Par Ex) slow release fertilizer, sulfur coated urea, Scotts brand, or Milorganite. The average turf fertilizer budget is \$11,245; \$2,895 for insecticides, \$2,396 for herbicides and \$7,985 for fungicides. All budgets in the areas of herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and fertilizers have increased in the past two years.

"I would like to see longer-lasting insecticides come on the market," said one superintendent. "There has been more turf damage over the last few years as supplies of the older hydrocarbon pesticides are being used up. Some courses are spraying insecticides routinely which not only increase hazards to spray personnel, but also may lead to resistance."

Most superintendents answering the survey base their seed purchases on variety name rather than price and budget. On the average, they spend \$1,735 for seed renovation and \$2,933 for winter overseeding annually.

Other superintendents and industry publications provide the best buying sources followed by extension agents, advertising, and promotional literature.


While management is expecting more from the superintendent, many respondents said the need for being recognized as a turf professional was still great.

"I find it hard to convince the management of the course that there are different conditions on the course that I must contend with and to have them view me as a professional who knows his job. Trying to control this facet of the operation is a bigger headache than any turf problems I may have."

WT&T



Shadow shines in my fairway mixture

 **Harvey B. Junor,**
Superintendent, Portland Golf Club,
Portland, Oregon

Harvey Junor mixes 25 percent Shadow fine fescue with CBS brand perennial ryegrass blend to overseed his fairways, and

is initiating a tee overseeding program using the same combination. Harvey finds that a Shadow/perennial ryegrass mixture on his fairways requires less watering than the old *Poa annua*, while effectively crowding it out. His Shadow performs exceptionally well where trees compete for sunlight, water and nutrients.

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Like Harvey's prestigious Portland Golf Club, more and more courses from the transition zone north are mixing Shadow fine fescue with turf-type perennial ryegrasses like Citation, Birdie, Omega, Manhattan and Manhattan II for

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Circle No. 150 on Reader Inquiry Card

Pinehurst

Grooming a champion takes experience, long hours and meticulous care -- three of Wayne Maples' and Lew Metts' specialties

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor

"Intense" is the name of the game at Pinehurst Country Club.

The Pinehurst, NC, vicinity has one of the highest concentrations of golf courses in one area in the world. The six-course complex (the first active golf course complex built in the U.S.) totals 850 acres with 630,000 square feet of greens with an average of 1,500 people playing a day during peak season. The club is open 12 months a year and had a whopping 1983 business increase of 126 percent.

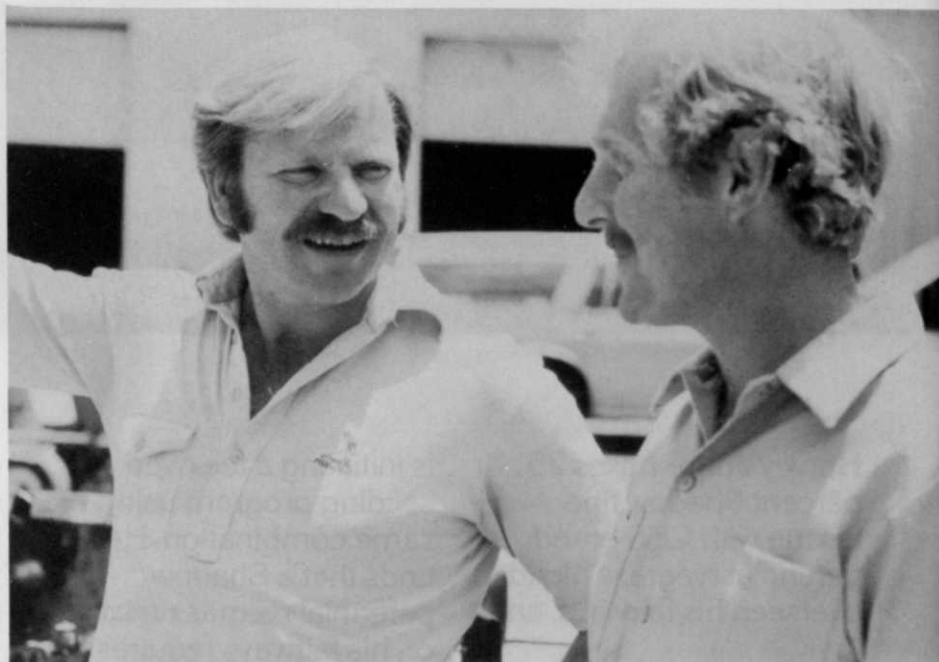
"Intense" is a household word at Pinehurst. Ask two of its superintendents, Wayne Maples and Lewis Metts.

Maples' prestigious No. 2 course (this year named to *Golf Digest's* Top 10 courses in the country), averages 260 people playing a day during peak season.

"There's more pressure here to keep the level of maintenance up because of heavy play ..."

The club's computerized tee time system turns people away on many days.

Because of the caliber of the course, it must be kept in tournament condition at all times. That's pressure, pure and simple.



Lew Metts, left, is in charge of Courses 1, 3 and 5 at Pinehurst.

Metts, in charge of courses 1, 3 and 5, starts his day at 4:30 a.m. during the busy summer months and usually ends it around 8 p.m. There is still not enough time to get everything done.

Both men's courses are part of an overall \$1.55 million maintenance budget, with each course having its own individual budget and equipment.

Maples and Metts work with Lee Dalton, superintendent on course No. 6 and Bob Farren on course No. 4. Bill Donnelly assists Metts and Barry Carter is another Pinehurst assistant superintendent.

Lofty origins

Donald J. Ross designed courses 1 through 4 at Pinehurst. It is course No. 2, though, with its small, sloping greens, deep bunkers, loose, sandy soil and rough accented with love grass, that has emerged as the architect's *tour de force*. Because of its sloping greens and fringe areas, No. 2 has earned the dubious distinction of being the most difficult course in the world to play from within 50 yards of the greens.

"Sparse-looking greens are my main problem," said Maples.

Tees, greens and fairways are common bermudagrass. Maples