

of systemic pesticides by reducing their absorption by plant roots and soil-borne pathogens and insects.

The single research report in my files is for a study in which 14 “non-nutritional growth enhancers” were applied to a creeping bentgrass putting green. Several humic acid and humate products were among those tested. The focus of the study was the effects of the products on rooting and root development. Data averaged over all rooting depths for the entire growing season revealed that none of the products significantly affected bentgrass root length or root to numbers.

Because so little research seems to have been done with humic acid products on turfgrass, there exists the possibility that there are situations where significant positive responses can occur. My assessment is that we should not expect positive effects over a wide range or conditions. Other than possible reductions in the effectiveness of pesticide applications when the humate or humic acid resides on the soil surface, the products are rather harmless when applied at rates recommended by the manufacturers.

There is, however, no justification at this time for using them on more than a small scale, trial basis. Humic acid will not compensate for poor turfgrass cultural practices.

Editor's Note: Reprinted from *The Grass Roots*.

Linking Up with the World of Golf

BY DARREN DAVIS
OLDE FLORIDA GOLF CLUB

Have you ever had a vendor come into your facility and try to sell you a product that you felt would be of absolutely no benefit to you? Later, after much thought or persuasion, you find your way clear to purchase or try the product. The months pass by, and each month you experiment with the product a little more or put more faith into it. Finally, a year goes by and you reflect back and ponder how you could have ever survived without this great product.

Sound familiar? Well, this is a true



Olde Florida Assistant Superintendent Scott Whorrall checks latest weather radar on Golf Link.

story and it happened to me recently. The product is Golf Link, a complete weather and information satellite service.

Like most of you, I am very picky how I spend my club's money, and I treat it as if it were my own. When a vendor came by with a demo of this product I wondered to myself how I could ever justify leasing a product like this. Then he told me about a trial offer that guaranteed me that if I did not like the system, I could return it. That sounded fair, and I trusted the vendor, so I checked a couple of references and agreed to the trial.

What is Golf Link? Among other things, Golf Link is an electronic weather system. Golf Link is a division of Broadcast Partners. Broadcast Partners supplies Golf Link with the electronic weather information. This information is also supplied to other similar companies, one of which is FarmDayta. This is the system I originally leased and which many other superintendents still have. The

FarmDayta system provides excellent weather information. However, some of the other information, such as the price of beef in Iowa or the stock market figures, had no bearing in my grass-growing world. I consider myself a well-rounded person, but I didn't find this information relevant to the golf course that is paying for this service.

One day I was thumbing through a copy of a trade magazine and came across an article on Golf Link. The article stated: "Golf Link is designed for the golf industry, providing subscribers with news that superintendents would enjoy. This includes turf tips, national and local association updates, research, new product information and commentaries. And, probably most importantly instant Doppler weather radar, weather forecasting capabilities and soon lightning strike maps." After reading the article on Golf Link, I thought it sounded just like my system with one major difference. The

difference is that instead of providing rarely used farm information, Golf Link provides information that relates directly to the golf course business.

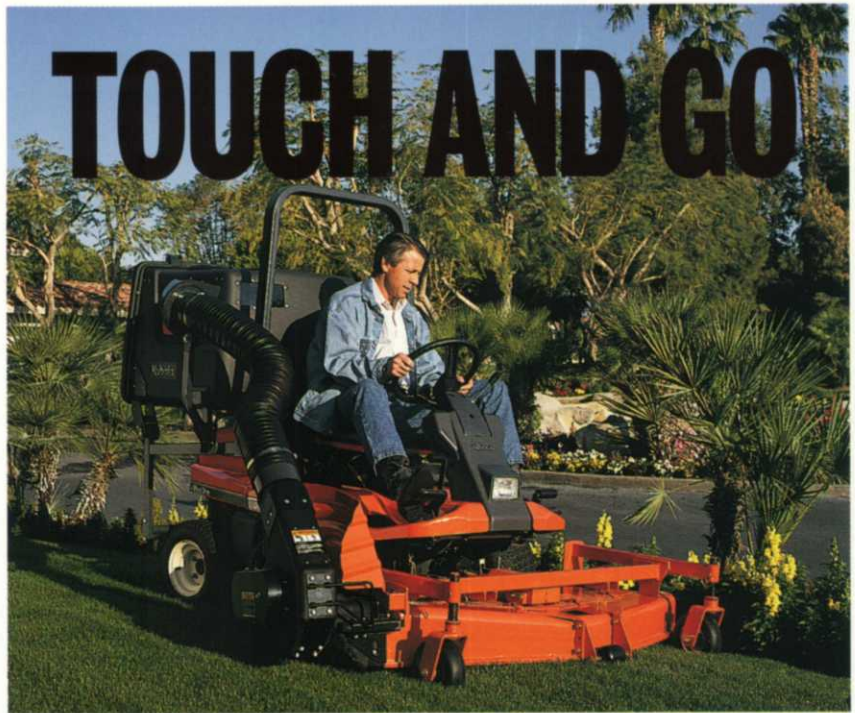
Golf Link provides access to the systems of the GCSAA, USGA, PGA, NGF, EPA, architects, builders and others. Also, recently the FGCSA Board of Directors gave permission to Golf Link to put published articles out of the *Florida Green* into the system.

As you can see, the benefits of the Golf Link system are numerous. However, I have found two main uses that my staff and I employ the system for, both of which have substantial financial rewards to my club. These benefits are both related to the weather functions the machine provides, including instant Doppler weather radar and various projected forecast maps that are updated continuously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The hardware and monitor are located in the office of the office manager, who can be in radio contact with my staff and me at any time during the day. If adverse weather is approaching, the information is communicated by hand-held radio to the management staff, who can then make a judgment call on when to order the crew members off the golf course. Once the crew is in the maintenance facility, the Doppler weather radar is analyzed by the staff to help make a decision on whether to keep the crew at work or allow them to leave for the day. This helps us to save on labor cost that might have otherwise been wasted.

The other financial reward that we obtain by using the weather functions of the system is in planning applications of fertilizer or other compounds. We all know that one application of a product that is washed away by rainfall can be a costly mistake. By using the system in correlation to the application of compounds that could be potentially harmful it also signifies a commitment to being a conscious environmental steward.

The weather maps and radar are also used daily when determining whether or not to irrigate the golf course. We are fortunate enough to have a weather station that will cumulate all the factors that go into evapotranspiration and down-



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load this information to the computer to adjust the daily watering times. However, before we allow the computer to do this, we check the current radar and the forecast map to insure that rain is not imminent. Even though the irrigation system is hooked into a rain sensor, if the computer has already begun to run the nightly irrigation schedule the water that was applied might have been unnecessary.

I think the moral of the story, or the lesson I have learned, is that things are not always black and white. If you look hard enough into something you will find many functions or uses that are not always evident at first glance. We have a tough job that isn't getting any easier and every tool that we can utilize to help us accomplish our duties is of benefit to us.

Professionalism, Part II — Is Your Image a True Reflection?

Do you consider your professional work responsibilities comparable to that of an airline pilot or a judge? If you answered "yes" then I like your attitude. If you said "no" then we've got something to discuss. Do think they are superior to you?

Just why do we look up to the profession of an airline pilot? When we see the pilot and flight crew walking to our gate, don't you expect to see a certain "image" in the pilot? A crisp neat uniform, confident attitude, walking tall, in command. How would you feel if instead you saw an unshaven, staggering, bleary eyed individual with alcohol on his breath. Would you be inclined to board the plane? Probably not! No matter what you do for a living shouldn't you have the expectation of positive traits and behavior that define a professional's career?

An airline pilot's or judge's image can be easily identified with life and death responsibility in their work. Have you thought about the golf course superintendent's responsibility for proper administration of pesticides. We have to guard against improper exposure to our employees, golfers and the environment

in general. How can our image presumed to be any less important? How can we afford to be any less professional?

On my return flight from the GCSAA Conference, we hit a patch of turbulence over the Rocky Mountains that sent the plane dropping, dipping and veering off course. The plane was stone quiet as we sat frightened to death as the "professional" in the cockpit fought to control the plane. In a few minutes the plane was stabilized and the pilot came on the intercom and apologized for the inconvenience. He explained that the unstable air we hit is caused by the mix of warm and cool air blowing over the mountains. It doesn't show up on radar. You can't see it coming. You just have to deal with it when it happens.

I didn't see a single passenger go up to the cockpit and chew him out or disagree with his answer. Why? Because we're not qualified to dispute his answer. It seems that we, as golf course superintendents, are always second guessed. Our explanations and answers are often disputed and challenged. Golfers seem to think because they mow grass they are qualified to pass judgment. They don't have much empathy for that "unseen turbulence" we experience like low oxygen levels in lakes that might cause a fish kill. They immediately point a finger at the "pilot" superintendent and think something incompetent has happened.

If we can form a visual image of that commanding pilot or a wise judge, what is the image of a golf course superintendent? More and more everyday we are being called upon to be leaders and stewards of a very valuable resource, the green space and wildlife sanctuary in the ever sprawling urban environment. The mantle of environmental responsibility is being placed on our shoulders.

Our professional image will be formed by our ability to provide thorough and accurate information that educates the public and dispels the negativism to golf that has been so widely publicized. Our image will also be reflected in the behavior and appearance of our staff from the rookie greensman to the Superintendent. It will be manifested in the cleanliness of our shops and equipment.

Professionalism has to come from the top. If you lead by example, that professionalism will trickle down to the most inexperienced person on your staff. Professionalism to the utmost is what every golfer expects of you whether you like it or not. What do they see? Is your image a true reflection of a professional?

*Mike Bailey, GCS
Boca Rio C.C.*

Professionalism, Part II — The Assistant's Role in Golf Course Operations

In recent times, the image and responsibilities of the golf course superintendent have greatly changed. In the early years, they were thought of as greenskeepers with little or no formal education. Today, many golf course superintendents hold a specialized degree in turfgrass management and are recognized as golf course managers. As challenges and opportunities for the modern golf course superintendent have changed, so has the role of the assistant.

Today, many golf course superintendents are busy with committee meetings, budget tracking and preparation, as well as dealing with numerous government regulations. For these reasons, a superintendent places greater responsibility on the assistant superintendent.

It is the assistant who carries on the day-to-day tasks of the golf course. He or she works directly with the golf course crew in scheduling, training and ensuring assignments are completed properly, efficiently and safely. Self-confidence in his or her abilities to supervise the golf course staff and deal independently with a variety of issues, without daily guidance from the superintendent, is necessary.

An assistant superintendent must display strong work ethics through hard work, honesty and dependability because he or she is a positive role model for the crew. The assistant must also project a professional image to other club employees as well as to the club's membership.