



Rick Wise, CGCS wears many hats and almost as many logos (PGA of America, PGA Club at the Reserve and GCSAA) for the PGA of America golf complex in St. Lucie, Florida. Photo by Joel Jackson.

A funny thing happened on the way to The Poa



From left, Joel Jackson and Kevin Downing representing The Florida Green join Mike Graham and George Cogsdell from the Fort Pierce newspaper at the media day for the opening of the PGA Reserve's South Course. Photo courtesy of the PGA of America.

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

Two weeks before the Poa Annuu Classic, I received a call from Sherry Major, Public Relations Manager for the PGA of America. A copy of the latest Florida Green had just crossed her desk, and she called to see if *The Florida Green* would like to send a couple of folks to participate in the media day being held for the grand opening of the South Course of the new PGA Club at the Reserve. I had read an article in *Golf Course News* about this new venture and how the superintendent, Rick Wise, CGCS wore three logos on his golf shirt (GCSAA, PGA of America and The PGA Club) signifying the unity of purpose of this new operation. I was very interested in talking to him and seeing the new course. A few phone calls later and I had drafted Kevin Downing, CGCS, from nearby Willoughby GC in Stuart as my playing partner. Since the event was just one day ahead of my planned departure for the Poa, I took an extra day's leave and headed south.

I found that sleepy, laid back St. Lucie, Florida has just been put on the golf map for good! The PGA of America has moved into town, purchased the St. Lucie West course and has just developed a 36 hole

complex at the Reserve based on the Fazio Design Group's imagination. Tom, Jan Beljan and Steve Masiak have dreamed up a Carolina/Florida one-two punch that will test your skill and please your eye. The rolling, piney Carolina-look North Course with undulating greens stresses the short game while the coastal, marshy, wetland South Course requires more attention to driving and approach strategies.

The goal of PGA Properties, Inc. is to develop a chain of courses across the country that will provide public access golf to top notch golf courses at affordable prices. The PGA Club's rates for this year were \$49 during the winter and \$25 for the summer with even more specials for late afternoon and junior golfers. This first venture has been challenging and rewarding for all concerned, and especially from our perspective for Rick Wise, CGCS Turf Operations Manager.

Wise has been busy sprucing up the recently acquired St. Lucie West course just one mile east of the new PGA Club and overseeing construction and grow-in of the new 36 hole complex. Wise was assisted in this monumental task by: Su-

perintendents, Barry Lezark at The PGA Club and Mike Vannoy at St. Lucie West; Assistant Superintendent Clay Marshall at The PGA Club; Shop Manager Brian Layle, Irrigation Tech Stephan Deek, IPM Tech Mike Adams and Administrative Assistant Jackie Harris.

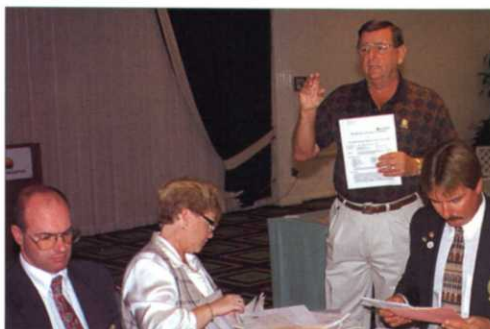
Wise said, "People have been looking at me this past year and a half, shaking their heads and asking if I was crazy! We started construction on the North Course in late '94 and got shutdown by bad weather in January 1995. We finally started planting in June of '95 and we replanted and we replanted while trying to start construction on the South Course. You know what kind of summer we had! We finished planting the South Course in November of '95 and there was much discussion of the pro's and con's about trying to overseed so we could open this winter. Realizing we would likely have to deal with a rough first year grow-in transition and keep explaining why the condition of the South Course was so far behind the North, the PGA agreed it was better to complete the bermuda grow-in and postpone opening till now. They bit the bullet and it has paid off in a much

better stand of turf than we would have had."

I asked Wise about the three logos on his shirt and their implication. "I can't say enough about the communications and teamwork I have received from the members of the PGA," Wise said. "They have listened to and respected my input and have kept me in the loop at all times. Marty Kavanaugh, Senior Director of PGA Golf Properties, and Bill Cioffoletti, Head Golf Professional have been just super to work with and it's not unusual to find Jim Awtrey, CEO of the PGA of America, strolling into my office at 7:00 AM to see how things are going. It's been a great experience. Jim is really proud of our maintenance facility and often shows it off to visitors before they see the clubhouse. I was able to work closely with the architect and make some changes. We have a built in recycling system. We don't release any clippings or rinsate into the environment. In fact, the whole project received an environmental awareness award from Links magazine. While all this has been going on, I have also had the new courses in the Audubon Signature program and St. Lucie West in the ACSP Certification program."

As for the media day itself, Kevin and I found ourselves not on the print media team, The Scribes, but rather on the electronic media team, The Mics, something to do with balancing the numbers on the teams. At any rate thanks to Kevin's 76, the Mics drubbed the Scribes -69 to -31. As for me, well my game still needs lots of work, but I enjoyed the day and was pleased that *The Florida Green* had been invited to participate. If you get a chance, swing by and take a look. You will enjoy the whole facility and the experience.

Charlie Campbell of Dow Elanco made a brief presentation to the FGCSA Board to announce a new rebate program that will benefit turf research. Photo by Joel Jackson.



1996 Poa Annua Classic offers respite in transition

Spring means transition. Spring means renovation. Spring means The Poa Annua Classic and The Naples Beach Club. Like the swallows returning annually to Capistrano, superintendents, suppliers and their wives and families return to Naples for the rites of spring passage and the beginning of the intense hot Florida growing season.

This Poa Annua was a chance to catch our breath and swap horror stories about the worst Florida winter in the 1990's. It was an opportunity at the Spring Board Meeting for all the FGCSA Chapters to fine tune their understanding of the impending GCSAA affiliation process. It was a time to earn continuing education credits at the Friday Seminar. It was an excuse to limber up the rusty golf swing and raise



Architect Ron Forse answers a question during the break in The History of Golf Course Architecture seminar held at the Poa Annua Classic. Photo by Joel Jackson.

All ten FGCSA Chapters were represented at the Spring board meeting to discuss GCSAA affiliation, IFAS organization, research funding, legislative initiatives, public relations, education and next year's budget. Photo by Joel Jackson.

