Jarrell tackles Fla. issues head-on

The organizers of the Florida Golf Council needed a superintendent to serve on its environmental committee. Jarrell stepped forward. The Florida GCSA needed a secretary/treasurer and the Florida Turfgrass Association a director. Again, Jarrell answered the call. “I’m concerned about what’s happening in the golf industry. If you can help steer things in the right direction, that’s great,” explained Jarrell of his involvement in so many extracurricular activities in addition to his workload at his Lake Worth, Fla. course.

Perhaps best known nationally for his work at Golfweek, Jarrell said he enjoys the opportunity to flex his literary muscle, even though “I was basically drafted” for the job four years ago by then-Florida GCSA President Tom Burrows. “If I didn’t do it, another literate person foolish enough to do it,” Jarrell joked. “Writing gives me the chance to educate the public about the problems superintendents face. It amazes me to find out just how uninformed golfers and the public are about what we do.”

Jarrell firmly believes golf courses benefit the environment. He considers himself an environmentalist and has little use for “so-called” environmentalists who demand zero risk, a group he and others have called “toxic terrorists.”

Unfortunately, those are the people who get the press and often drive the decisions made in Washington, Jarrell said. “People at the EPA have told me their agency is really a political rather than a scientific organization; he said. “Many decisions are made on the basis of what people want instead of what can be scientifically proven. And many people are misinformed.”

Which is why Jarrell is so happy with the efforts of the Florida Golf Council to lobby the Florida statehouse on behalf of the state’s 5.5-billion golf industry and why he agreed to join the group’s environmental issues. “I’m encouraged by what’s happening with the Florida Golf Council,” he said. “Superintendents have been the leaders in dealing with regulatory problems for years. It’s just beginning to hit home with developers, architects and owners that we all have to deal with this together.”

Jarrell speaks from almost 20 years experience in the golf business. He earned a bachelor’s degree in ornamental horticulture, he stepped across campus to become head superintendent at the university’s Donald Ross-designed golf course, the former Gainesville Golf & Country Club. Jarrell defines his facility as a “typically flat South Florida course.” Untypically, it is crossed with a handful of different Bermudagrass varieties.

“The biggest challenge here is the variety of soil and grass types,” Jarrell said. “I think it makes it difficult to have any kind of uniform turf management program. You have to treat every area differently.”

The same can be said of the people on Jarrell’s staff. He treats each as an individual, setting standards by his own example and encouraging staff members to “simply do the best job they can.”

“They chose this career because they like what it means. It’s great being on the golf course early in the morning, seeing the sun rise, having the whole course to yourself. It was important enough for the Florida GCSA’s Annual Distinguished Service Award.”

Jarrell has since been selected to speak on those first three years,” he said. Jarrell and Lee have since compared those first three years,” he said. Jarrell and Lee have since compared the best and worst-case sites. There is more risk that Jarrell is doing a very good job based on initial reports from its ground water monitoring wells at Palm Beach National. All 37 pesticide tests were below detection limits.

“One of the best things that has happened in the golf industry is that Florida golf is much more environmentally aware,” said Jarrell. “I’m encouraged by what’s happening in the golf industry. If I can help steer things in the right direction, that’s great,” explained Jarrell of his involvement in so many extracurricular activities in addition to his workload at his Lake Worth, Fla. course.

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