Chemical exhibitors pump up the volume

Making noise is perhaps the primary objective of exhibitors at the annual Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) show. By that I mean creating some buzz on the show floor. You know what I'm saying: People talking about, making noise regarding a particular company's products.

Without a doubt, chemical companies made the most noise in Las Vegas. This industry sector was busy on several different fronts, from new product releases, to division realignments, to distribution relationships.

Who made the most noise? It's a toss-up between Novartis — the newly merged entity comprised of former Ciba and Sandoz — and Zeneca, which rolled out its highly anticipated new broad-spectrum fungicide, Heritage.

Ciba and Sandoz — and Zeneca, which tested very well in the field. When EPA signs off brings a plethora of existing skills to bear. At a news conference held in Las Vegas, Novartis formally introduced its new Head of Specialty Products, Thomas McGowan; its Director of Turf & Ornamental Products, former Sandoz employee Gene Hinte; its National Sales Manager, former Ciba employee Jose Milan; and its new Market Manager for Golf, Jerry Mark Leslie, managing editor.

We need another dead-ball era

I'm close to agreeing with Jack. We've got to do something with the golf ball... We're at a critical red line about a lot of things with equipment.

Griffiths: "We can look at USGA statistics all day long. But if you look at black-and-white, real-world examples of what's going on, I don't think the statistics support the way the Tour is playing."

Griffiths lamented the fact that Tour pros oftentimes need not hit their mid-irons because they can hit today's ball so much farther than when the grand old classic golf courses were designed.

"Take a par-4 from 1970 on which you hit a driver-7 iron, or even driver-wedge," he said. "In 1970 the average Tour player hit the driver around 250 yards and the wedge 115 yards. That's 375 yards. Today, they hit a driver an average 280 yards. Put a wedge in their hands at 135 yards, and you're at 415. How do we put a medium iron in these guys' hands? You have to have a 500-yard hole."

Historically, a shot of under 100 yards demanded finesse — determining how much of a swing to take. It was one of the toughest shots in golf.

But in 1997, pros are carrying three or four wedges, pared off so that they can be played with a full swing from 80 to 135 yards out. A Georgia guy, Griffiths used a NASCAR analogy. Here it goes:

"Car racing and golf are very similar. They require ultimate concentration. The first thing you have to do is beat the track you're on, or the golf course you're on. The second thing is to beat your competitor. In 1969, after 175 miles per hour won the pole position at Daytona. That speed climbed — very much like our golfers.

To the editor:

I'm a golf course superintendent, just new to the web. I'm totally impressed with the job you did on the Golf Course News web site! As the newspaper itself is broad and diverse, your work exceeds it! As only the golf web can! Great job, keep up the great work. I'm currently seeking to educate myself on the environmental and OSHA laws that apply to new golf courses in Vermont. Any suggestions? I'm going searching... thanks for any or everything.

Mary P. Knaggs

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