

GCSAA names environmental leaders in golf

By JOEL JOYNER

NAPLES, Fla. — Collier's Reserve Country Club in Naples, Fla., and its superintendent William Davidson, Jr., have been named the overall winners of the 2001 GCSAA/*Golf Digest* Environmental Leaders in Golf Award.

Winners were named in national categories for public, private and resort golf



Superintendent Billy Davidson stands among one of the naturalized areas at Collier's Reserve.

courses and one international category, with the overall winner selected from those four. "It was a big surprise," said Davidson. "If nothing else, we were hoping to inform people about some of the programs we're doing at the course."

BURN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

One of the unique programs implemented here at the facility is a burn management plan. Davidson holds a license in the state of Florida to prescribe fire to do habitat management.

"We started the program a few years ago," he said. "It's unique because there are not too many golf courses that light fires next to million dollar homes."

The property is nearly 450 acres with more than 180 acres of preserved land. "We burn selected sites every year, and basically approach the same locations in three-to-four year cycles," said Davidson. "We accomplish the burns in small blocks, around 5,000 square feet at a time. It's less expensive than managing the areas by hand and much faster. In that respect,

we're using Mother Nature in our favor."

Davidson completed an 80-hour course and all prerequisites with the state's Division of Forestry to become a certified burn manager. His qualification eliminates the need for the course to bring in an outside contractor.

"The fire takes care of everything leaving a nice clean environment," he said. "It removes all the exotic, invasive plants and dead vegetation. It opens up the ground for sunlight in order for new plants and wildflowers to regenerate. In addition, all of the burned materials are turned into fertilizers to assist new plant growth — just the way Mother Nature intended."

Unlike the Division of Forestry that burns hundreds of acres every year, the course is fortunate to have an irrigation system to connect hoses to and have a constant water supply available. Davidson usually burns during the winter and spring seasons.

"Last winter the state was in a major drought and prohibited any burning," he said. "We'll tackle the burn management program again in late spring, early summer this year."

WILDLIFE RELOCATION PROGRAM

The course established a wildlife relocation program on the property last year.

"Any animals that are taken to the local conservancy for rehabilitation, like if they were hit by a car, we've become a foster site for them," said Davidson. "We've become a home for displaced animals and animals rehabilitated after an injury."

The facility has released a gray fox, several birds, and a couple of tortoises to date, Davidson said. "The homeowners [more than 220 homes] are strong proponents of our environmental efforts which makes things much easier," he said.

Collier's Reserve is no stranger to receiving environmental recognition. The course, and its former superintendent Tim Hiers, won the association's national category for a private club back in 1995. In fact, the course was the first ever Audubon International Signature status golf course when it was built in 1993, said Davidson.

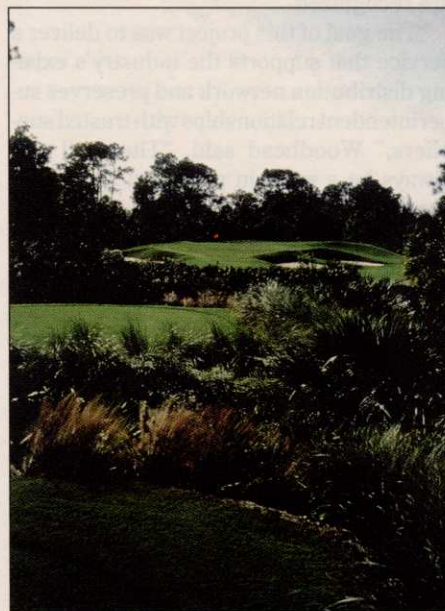
"There was no signature program at the time," he said. "Tim Hiers and Ron Dodson [president and CEO at Audubon International] basically created the signature program through the construction of this facility. It started here and has

been developed and enhanced to what it is now."

THE ENVELOPE PLEASE

The top entry for each GCSAA affiliated chapter was named for the Environmental Leaders in Golf Award, and merit awards were given to those who did not earn national or chapter honors, but — in the opinion of the judges — deserved special recognition. The national winners were:

- National Public: Kevin Hutchins, Presidio Golf Course, San Francisco, Calif., Northern California Golf Course Su-



The 12th hole at the Collier's Reserve CC

perintendents Association

- National Private: William Davidson Jr., Collier's Reserve Country Club, Naples, Fla., Everglades Golf Course Superintendents Association

- National Resort: Anne Hickman, Barton Creek Country Club, Austin, Texas, Lone Star Golf Course Superintendents Association

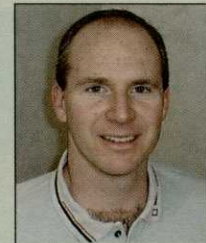
- International: James Sua, CGCS, National Service Resort & Country Club, Singapore

National, chapter and merit winners were recognized Feb. 7 during the GCSAA's Golf General Session.

The Environmental Leaders in Golf Award is sponsored by Syngenta Professional Products; Rain Bird Corp., Golf Division; Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products; and Pursell Technologies Inc.

Clodfelter wins back-to-back golf titles

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — Mitch Clodfelter, superintendent at the Cowans Ford Country Club in Stanley, N.C., has captured his second consecutive title at the GCSAA's 2002 Golf Championship held here at five area courses, Feb. 4-5. He is the first back-to-back winner of the tournament since Roger Null in 1990 and 1991.



Mitch Clodfelter

Clodfelter shot a six over par to win the event posting a 75 each day for a final score of 150. Battling strong winds and cool temperatures, he finished his two-stroke victory at World Golf Village's The Slammer & The Squire course.

He led a tight match against Mark Henderson, superintendent at the Gulf Stream [Fla.] Golf Club who marked up a pair of 76s for a combined score of 152. A three-handicapper, Clodfelter was a member of the 1989 Guilford (N.C.) College squad. The consecutive titles marks the seventh time in the 52-year history of the tournament that a competitor had repeat victories.

Superintendent Andrew Huffman at the Beloit (Kan.) Country Club gave Clodfelter a run for his money by posting a 73 on the first day of the event, but he followed the day after with a score of 80 to finish off with a total of 153, tying for the third slot in the ranks with fellow superintendent Robert Rogers at the Governors Club in Chapel Hill, N.C.

For the eighth consecutive year, The Toro Co. joined forces with GCSAA to host the event that had a field of 610 golf course superintendents from around the world.

Thompson receives USGA Green Section Award

FAR HILLS, N.J. — Long-time golf course superintendent George B. Thompson was awarded the United States Golf Association's 2002 Green Section Award at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Orlando, Fla. The honor, presented Feb. 9, recognized Thompson for "distinguished contributions to golf through work in turfgrass."

The 63-year-old Thompson has been a superintendent for more than 35 years. "All my heroes in the industry have received this award," said Thompson. "I'm really honored to be part of this group."

A graduate from the Agricultural School at the University of Massachusetts in Stockbridge, Thompson spent nearly 18 years as superintendent at the Colum-



George Thompson

bia Country Club in Chevy Chase, Md. He then spent another 18 years as superintendent at the Country Club of North Carolina in Pinehurst where he retired in 2000.

WORKING FOR NEW TECHNOLOGY

Thompson stood out in the course of his career as a superintendent willing to investigate new techniques. In the late 1960s, he was one of the first to use the improved perennial ryegrass varieties for fairway turf in the transition zone. Several universities and chemical companies sought him out to evaluate new products and turfgrass varieties.

When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established the Safe Harbor Program in the mid-1990s to protect the red-cockaded woodpecker in the North Carolina Sandhills, the country Club of North Carolina was among the first to join the program. The club nurtured a hospitable habitat for the endangered species among the old growth longleaf pines and today has one of the largest populations of these woodpeckers of any golf course in the Southeast.

Since 1991, Thompson has continued his environmental activities as a participant in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

Thompson also has given back to the industry by being one of the first to offer student internships on his golf course. Many of his former assistants have become successful golf course superintendents and industry leaders.

He has been an active volunteer in the local turfgrass industry as well. Thompson's resume includes positions as president of the Mid-Atlantic Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Greater Washington Golf Course Superintendents Association, and the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina (TCNC).

His leadership at the TCNC helped to establish a strong, long-term university/turfgrass industry relationship.

Today, Thompson continues to influence the golf course superintendents of the future through his teaching and speaking activities. Even in retirement, he teaches a turf management course at nearby Sandhills College.