Kevin Ross selects top new products from GCSAA show

By KEVIN ROSS

ORLANDO, Fla. — While walking the trade show floor, there was a decidedly quieter buzz than usual surrounding new equipment debuts. Whether it was because of the events of Sept. 11 or company cutbacks and slowdowns, ground breaking new products were few and far between. However, some new products were hot topics of discussion on the show floor among superintendents.

NEW AND HOT

• My Debut of the Show goes to the miniature foam marking kits. These kits are designed for use with walking rotary or drop spreaders. Although foam kits have been around for years, and Savranl North America displayed their prototype last year in Dallas, these have certainly been needed for years. Superintendents can now eliminate all those old marking tricks such as gloves, golf balls, flags, and paint.

Wallace Q&A

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2003, and we’ll be working hard to put that entire infrastructure in place this year. In addition, we’ll continue to look at our government relations and move forward with research, scholarship, education and all the other programs the association offers. The association is a big operation. There’s no one overarching goal except to continue moving the GCSAA and its many programs forward and serve our members.

GCN: What challenges do you anticipate this year? Wallace: I think the challenges we face are those that are going to be faced by most every other industry. Were not immune to the economy. We’re also not immune to the continued consolidation within our industry. As a result, the GCSAA is an organization that’s dependent on revenue streams such as advertising, the conference and show, and membership growth. The economy will play a large part in where we go. Our business is such that our members have to take a budget each year to their clubs and state their cases as to what the return on the investment is in belonging to the GCSAA. We have a marvelous case to state, but it’s one of those things that every year we have to sell it.

GCN: Last year, the GCSAA launched a pilot program for its e-commerce initiative. What role do you see the Internet taking with the association this year and in the near future?

Wallace: The focus needs to be on making continuous improvements and staying engaged and looking at different avenues. We must be willing to look outside what exists and say, ‘Are there other ways of doing business?’ That’s been critical in our Web strategy. Seven years ago when I joined the board, our Web strategy committee didn’t even exist. We try to do things in a planned, methodical manner, but we also recognize that things move fairly quickly in the e-world. We’ve adapted to that, and we’re working our way through that process. The way we look at it is not necessarily doing e-business but business-e. In other words, in what ways can we do our business electronically and will it work in other areas.

GCN: What potential benefits to the association and its members do you see available with the Internet, and are there any obstacles? Wallace: It’s certainly an educational resource and a communication tool. Reaching out to international members is a tremendous benefit. It allows us to communicate with them in a more time relevant format. However, the Internet does present a generation challenge. For younger superintendents and individuals just coming out of college, they’ve cut their teeth on computers and been involved with them on their own. For gentlemen like myself, who may be getting toward the latter end of their careers as time goes on, computers weren’t available when we entered the profession.

It’s not like we’re antiques, but it is a function we’ve had to go back and learn. But we recognize that the future is in computers and electronics, and that’s where future superintendents need to be and feel comfortable.

GCN: Your contract with the Hop Meadow CC was not renewed this year. I imagine that a leadership role with the association and a leadership role at a golf club can prove challenging. Have you found any difficulties in trying to balance those two commitments?

Wallace: In taking my new position at Fairview Farm, one of my main concerns was my commitment to the GCSAA. The owner is very comfortable with that and encourages me to continue with it. That was one of my main criteria for taking the position. Balancing the two leadership roles is challenging. You just need to look for facilities where owners or boards understand that what we’re doing — the mission of the GCSAA — is trying to provide the best educated and best superintendents available and continue to advance the profession. What we’re trying to accomplish at the GCSAA is help make golf a better, more enjoyable and efficient game through education. Supporting the GCSAA is a function of the golf clubs giving back to the industry as a whole. Thankfully, there are some clubs out there that see that value.

— Joel Joyner

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The club is also creating a memorial on the course where members will be able to place their own bricks. The club will later be able to sell off the remaining bricks. "We've already discussed this idea with the members, and they've been enthusiastic," said Quinn. "We're looking at some outside advertising," he added. "We're going to be looking at some small acquisitions."