PGA opens in cold and sunny Orlando

It was a little bigger and a little better this year, as the PGA Merchandise Show kicked off another season for the majority of professionals in attendance at the Disney World site.

Going into the show's third year at the Florida resort, show coordinator John Zurek was smiling a little easier since the PGA has worked the bugs out since its first visit in 1975. But the cold winds of January were blowing all the way to Orlando, and the weather threw a chill into an otherwise well-run affair.

Total attendance edged up a little from the previous year with Show Director Tom Boyle counting 9,399 people winding through the maze of more than 240 exhibitors during the 4-day run. The figure represented an increase of 240 from the '76 show.

In direct relation to the total increase, a record 2,529 golf professionals made the rounds, 164 more than a year ago. Boyle had no number breakdown available in the categories of buyers, guests, or exhibitors. Golf professionals, some of which were non-buying assistants, made up nearly 27 percent of all the people at Disney World.

With no hope of hastening its planned convention complex's 1980 completion date, the PGA signed another two-year contract with the Disney organization to have the show there in 1978 and 1979. Solid dates for the '78 run are January 28-31. PGA officials told GOLF BUSINESS that Disney World had asked for a significant increase in price over the '77 show, and chances are good the difference will be reflected in next year's exhibitors' fees.

Among the 1977 exhibitors, there were fewer complaints about show positioning than in years past.

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USGA Green Section warms up down south

Stepping down from what many in the golf business thought was becoming an ivory tower, the United States Golf Association left the familiarity of its eastern home and headed south for its annual Green Section conference.

Chilly Atlanta played host to the USGA, as its January meeting left New York City for only the second time in history. The rewards were great for the Green Section, as a record crowd of more than 500 people jammed the meeting room at the Hyatt Regency to hear varied panels talk on course management. Green Section National Director Al Radko told GOLF BUSINESS he had never seen such a large turnout for an annual conference in all his years with the USGA. The audience was a tribute to the USGA’s new public relations effort to take its program to the industry by moving its annual gathering around the nation.

George Broadnax, president of the Atlanta Athletic Club, gave an elementary speech on what makes a golf course great. His presentation was somewhat obvious to an audience filled with experts. Broadnax did point out, though, that proper membership attitude is important if a superintendent is to make much needed improvements. Along the same lines, James Gabrielsen, one of Atlanta’s most notable amateur players, spoke on the factors of play in relation to great courses.

Joe Dey, a past USGA executive director and former Commissioner of the Tournament Players Division of the PGA, discussed the preparation of courses for tournament play in an interesting presentation displaying his vast knowledge of the rules of the game and how they effect preparation.

Dey, who was later to receive the USGA’s prestigious Bob Jones award for distinguished sportsmanship in the game, discussed in detail course preparation and the accessibility a golfer must have to the tee. “I have seen tournaments where the tees may be overhung with tree branches, impeding the golfer’s upward swing.”

One of the more interesting parts of the program was presented by Tom Marquiot, general manager at San Francisco’s Olympic Club. Marquiot’s topic was the development and maintenance of a course budget. With more than 60,000 rounds a year, a fleet of more than 100 golf cars, and a 240-acre tract of land for golf, Marquiot works with his superintendent to keep up a $600,000 budget.

“Many budgets are padded for that margin of error,” the Olympic general manager said. A sample of other clubs around the country by Marquiot found courses were still gambling when it came to determining what maintenance areas needed to be stressed.

Unknowns, as always, were the superintendent’s biggest enemy in keeping a lid on costs, Marquiot told the assembled. “A financial analysis is important today. A budget has to be met and superintendents have to realize this.”

With many clubs looking for outside revenues from groups composed of nonmembers, Marquiot warned that clubs must look into whether having such functions will cost more than they are worth. “We make such groups supply course caddies to supervise play and make sure golf cars do not damage our turf,” Marquiot noted.

Green Section Western Director Bill Bengefield then moderated a discussion by Lloyd MacKenzie, superintendent at Augusta (Ga.) National Golf Club, and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America past-president Richard Malpass on what makes a good golf crew at a course.

Keeping morale high was MacKenzie’s key.

“The superintendent must keep his key employees for a long time. This will insure continuity among the crew and especially on long-range projects.”

Malpass insisted crews must be “conscientious and careful.” The superintendent of Riverside G&CC, Portland, Ore., noted new employees must be thoroughly checked for qualifications and references before they start for you. Communication with the crew is essential, Malpass concluded, “Don’t keep your people in the dark.”

A pair of superintendents Joseph Flaherty, Baltusrol GC, Springfield, N.J.; and Carlton Gipson, The Woodlands in Texas—talked about the problems of irrigation. “You have to go with mother nature these days,” Gipson said, “Automatic irrigation can not do the whole job.”

Both agreed there was no great secret to irrigation, but Gipson admitted the less he had to depend on his automatic system, the better off he was.

Architect Ed Seay and Atlanta Athletic Club Superintendent Bobby McGee took on the topic of the importance of maintaining bunkers and traps. Seay, from Ponte Verda Beach, Fla., volunteered that the days of the free-form bunker some architects had designed into courses were gone. “Each hole must relate back to the player,” Seay said.

As the Green Section’s day-long seminar went into its last session, the uncomfortably high temperature in the large meeting room had dispersed most of the large crowd to where there were less than 50 people in the room. The Green Section staff took on the question of golf car traffic on courses, but the high heat even forced them to distraction.

In a high point to the conference, retired golf course superintendent Edward J. Casey, Union, N.J., was presented the annual Green Section award for distinguished service by USGA president Harry Easterly and Green Section Committee chairman Will F. Nicholson.
Oregon stays dry for GCSAA show

The golf course tour after the 48th annual GCSAA Turfgrass Conference had been billed as an opportunity to see firsthand the way Portland-area superintendents deal with dry summers "followed by a rainy winter," but visiting superintendents ended up seeing the results of a dry summer followed by a dry winter as the Northwest suffered through one of the worst droughts in its history.

The 1,200+ superintendents attending the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America conference and show didn't mind, however, as they were offered a combination of mild weather, interesting exhibits, and educational seminars.

Perhaps the most revolutionary of the '65 companies' exhibits were R & R Products' electric cup cutters and TransGlide's wheelless "golf cart" system. One of the most popular was T-graphics, Inc., which displayed a new line of sandblasted redwood golf course signs. Many of the larger manufacturers drew crowds as well, such as Toro with its mobile service lab and Cushman/Ryan with its new greens aerator.

Sports essayist and broadcaster Heywood Hale Broun keynoted the opening session of the conference, telling his audience that golf is a great game, but it should not be taken too seriously. "The pursuit of perfection is painful because perfection is unattainable."

For instance," he quipped, "the perfect score in golf is 18." Instead, golfers should set appropriate personal goals and be pleased when they reach them.

Also part of the opening ceremonies at GCSAA was the presentation to Robert M. Williams, superintendent of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., and a member of the GOLF BUSINESS advisory board, of the 1977 Distinguished Service Award — the highest award bestowed by the GCSAA. This was only the 28th time in 50 years it has been given.

The annual association business meeting was, as usual, closed to the press, but it was announced immediately afterward that the following national officers were elected: president — Theodore W. Woehrle, Oakland Hill Country Club, Birmingham, Mich.; vice president — George W. Cleaver, Chestnut Ridge Country Club, Lutherville, Md.; and directors — Michael R. Bavier, Inverness Golf Club, Palatine, Ill.; Hobart T. Burgan, Quail Creek Golf and Country Club, Oklahoma City; and Louis D. Haines, Denver (Colo.) Country Club.

Some 79 speakers addressed the superintendents during the 4-day program of educational seminars. One of the first was one of the best-attended. More than 200 management-minded superintendents filled the meeting room to hear James Mcloughlin, executive director of New York's Metropolitan Golf Association, discuss "opportunity and responsibility adjustments facing superintendents within a growing club industry." He told them that "the biggest problem facing superintendents is one they probably don't realize but certainly cannot readily control or influence: the virtual absence of the opportunity for vertical job advancement."

However, he added, "For those who wish to consider breaking through the vertical job barrier, a new set of options presents itself: "First, assignment with a regional association as administrative, communication, and consulting capability is developed."

"Second, preparation for a future career in club management. "The final opportunity (is) to become more visible at his club, and to communicate more directly with the board and members."

"Playing golf is one way, McLoughlin suggested, of accomplishing the latter. "I now realize probably only one out of 10 superintendents uses the game of golf as he might."

In another management session, consultant Ronald C. Frame pointed out that "people need to work" for value, satisfaction, and security. "Talking about objectives, he said that the goals of an pressures on managers and subordinates are basically the same — even though superintendents and workers rarely always divided into "we" and "they."

In what was termed a "thinking superintendent" session, John H. Musto, operations manager at Morefar, Brewster, N.Y., told how his course had saved $20,000 last year by doing less manicuring and, in effect, returning much of the course to its "natural beauty." Doing so, Musto contended, "adds shapes, texture, and color while cutting costs and maintaining playability." Parts of the course most affected are the rough, bunkers, and slopes around tees, aprons, and traps.

The seminars were, of course, too numerous to report all of them here. But the cliche about "something for everybody" certainly fit the program in this instance.

Prior to the conference and show, many of the superintendents played in the GCSAA golf tournament at Spyglass Hill and the Monterey Country Club's Dunes Course. New GCSAA champion is Vaughn Barkert, who received the United States Golf Association trophy; he is superintendent at Gore Lakes Golf Club, Murray, Utah. Gary C. Panter of Leawood (Kan.) South Country Club was awarded the GOLF BUSINESS trophy.

SCENES FROM GCSAA
(clockwise from upper left): The show opened a half-day early for distributors, but the aisles were full of unopened crates and unsetup displays . . . once set up, the exhibits covered everything from the large to the small . . . from putting greens . . . to patios.
CMAA marks 50 at Chicago meeting

A slide show of memories and all the hoopla that goes along with celebrating a half century in existence marked the Golden Anniversary of the Club Managers Association of America last month in Chicago — the city where it all began in 1927.

The CMAA went all out in the Conrad Hilton, showing the nearly 1,000 meeting attendees that this conference would be one to remember. Outgoing national president Harry Gray played the master of ceremonies for the week-long tribute to the trade. There was even a theatrical salute to the association, which because of the poor sound system in the Hilton put most present in line for a good pair of earplugs.

It wasn’t all pageant, though. There was some serious business and the CMAA got down to it at its annual business meeting. Twenty-four bylaw changes were proposed to the membership, and there were some definite disagreements between the leadership and the rank-and-file.

In the opening, the natural progression in the chain of succession occurred, as Josef Auerbach, Wichita (Kan.) Country Club, assumed the presidency as Gray left office. George Burton, Oak Ridge Country Club, Hopkins, Minn., moved up from his secretary-treasurer spot to the vice presidency. Burton was also chairman of the bylaws committee.

Hotly contested this year was the president's race. Auerbach put the vote to a final business meeting was made many years before the industry changed. Regardless,

Outgoing CMAA national president Harry Gray gavels in the 50th annual conference at the opening session at the Conrad Hilton. Gray, club manager at Northwood CC, Dallas, presided over the week-long Golden anniversary event.

proposing new members through the use of a "request for membership application" was tabled. Former CMAA national president John Outland, now chapter secretary for the Texas Lone Star section, made it clear that the proposition, if adopted, would double the workload of the chapter people and further burden the national office with paperwork.

Awards were also in big supply, as Gray announced that two past presidents were being made honorary members of the CMAA. Jerry Marlett, CMAA president in 1973 and now a director of the National Golf Foundation's club operation consulting service, and Charles E. Smith, CMAA president in 1965, were presented with gold membership cards.

More awards were handed out to the chapters themselves and their members. Chapter growth award was grabbed by the Arkansas Razorback chapter, which registered 30 percent growth over the last year, better than any of the 54 CMAA units. Chapter activities honors went to the Metropolitan chapter. One individual award started off in the Idea Fair competition with Robert M. Ward, Runway Bay, Bridgeport, Tex., winning the food and beverage category. In the party ideas competition, Michael S. Locke, Country Club of Lincoln (Neb.) took top prize, while the country club ideas section fell again to Robert MacDougall,

Pinehurst Country Club, Littleton, Colo. Management ideas award was won by Plato Neocleous, The Sutter Club, Sacramento, Cal.

Menu competition came in several categories with Peter Ditlev, Minnehaha Country Club, Sioux Falls, S.D., taking the special party menu award, while Richard Owens, Highland G&CC, Indianapolis won it for country club menu, and Jim Ford, Berrien Hills CC, Benton Harbor, Mich., took country club dinner menus.

As always, the week leading up to the final business meeting was accentuated with education and CMAA Director of Education Paul Gomez gave the membership a wide variety of seminars to attend.

The most-talked-about session had to be the one conducted by Tony Marshall, associate dean at Florida International University, Miami. With a flair for the theatrical, Marshall's seminar on legal tidbits for the manager bordered on the risque, but he got his points across on member liability and the law in general. His humorous use of audiostream display also added a fresh touch to sessions which often bore audiences.

For example, Marshall emphasized how simple it is for the manager to lessen the chances for liability, by just posting signs around the clubhouse indicating impending danger. Stating it can save a club the hassles that go along with possible liability actions in court.
More than 100 attended the session for country clubs of medium size. There were also rooms set up for the manager at the large and small country club, all sizes of city clubs, military clubs, fraternal clubs, swim and tennis clubs, and yacht clubs.

Frank Valley, a "medium country club" manager in Tennessee, told how he cut food costs by buying his meat from a member who was also a purveyor. Most reacted that his situation was a unique one. Many managers showed concern over the energy cost squeeze. One manager pointed to a $128,000 gas and light bill his Houston club totalled in '76, a 500 percent increase in costs over the last 2 years.

"Business starts with customers," said Florida International's Mike Hurst during his conference entitled "Food for Thought." Hurst noted managers with foodservices must have a commitment to excellence. It all starts with the employees, though, Hurst said. When interviewing prospective employees, gauge their personality traits. If they can sell themselves to you, then they should be able to sell your members or customers on your club and its service.

Management consultant Don Thoren gave an overview of different types of management techniques and suggested that managers could select which one would best suit their operation. Individual roundtable discussions later focused on a variety of topics, including: golf cars, decorating, laundry/dry/linen, problems with ERISA, taxation, certification in the CMAA, what the National Club Association was up to, insurance, and computers.

Education was the keynote at the recent 47th Michigan Turfgrass conference at Michigan State University. GCSAA national president Ted Woerhle, Oakland Hills CC, Birmingham, Mich., presents a GCSAA scholarship to Craig Guernsey, an MSU student.

National Club Association has recently gathered together some of the best accounting minds in the trade as a task force to combat this. NCA President Milton Meyer, Jr., says the task force will draft guidelines to be issued by the sub-committee on accounting standards for nonprofit organizations of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

PGA assistants get own national event

Keeping his pledge to establish more national events for all PGA members, President Don Padgett has announced the first annual national championship for club assistants this fall in Brockton, Mass.

Thorny Lea Golf Club will play host to the event, sponsored by local golf shoe manufacturer FootJoy. Dick Tarlow, president of FootJoy, has announced his firm will provide the total tournament purse of $25,000.

Contestants from each of the 39 PGA sections are expected to compete in the 54-hole tournament, which will run September 28-30. Padgett has made it clear that more such events will allow many of the fine, young golfers in the association an opportunity to compete for national titles.