

News

CONFERENCES

Superintendents gather at Purdue

Purdue University's campus provided an ideal setting for the annual Midwest Regional Turf Conference, and the Purdue basketball team's first National Invitational Tournament game added some extra excitement for the more than 500 superintendents and other turf managers gathered in West Lafayette, Ind., last month.

After an initial afternoon of general topics, the conference was divided for a day into three simultaneous sessions: private golf courses, public golf courses, and lawn care and general turf. The public golf program began on a positive note with old Bill Lyons, owner of Lyons Den Golf in Canal Fulton, Ohio, and vice president of the National Association of Public Golf Course Owners, talking about "care of the golfer." Probably no one takes better care of his golfers than Lyons — from putting litter bags and towels on every golf cart to providing fresh, cold drinking water on the course to operating a storm alert service during golfing hours — and he presented about two new ideas per minute during his 30-minute talk.



Schwartzkopf: Turf 2001?

Cecil McKay Jr., a Lansing, Mich., real estate broker who handles sales of golf courses nationwide, told the audience that although slow play may indeed be a problem on many courses, "We have more golf courses looking to find play than to speed it up."

McKay offered a raft of ideas to increase play, including:

- get your course accurately measured and marked
- condition and equip the course for the ease of players
- make the course enjoyable for women to play
- since a pro shop is essential to the overall atmosphere of a successful golf facility, keep it even if it doesn't make money
- "strong promotion of green fees is more profitable than trying to promote food sales"
- have "fun" activities, but be sure to explain special rules and handicap methods to participants — don't assume everyone knows what "best ball" or "Callaway" mean.

In the private golf course session, Kent McFarland of the Indiana Seed Co. explained some of the many changes occurring in turf seed varieties. Among the bentgrasses, in his opinion, McFarland said, Penncross is still the most popular; Penneagle shows promise; and Emerald is next.

Superintendents today have 50 varieties of bluegrass to choose from, McFarland said. Indiana Seed Co. sells 18 varieties — seven "actively." "Merion, Fylking, and some others are being eliminated by turf diseases," McFarland said, and are being replaced by new varieties. He named Sydsport, Barron, Adelphi, and Touchdown as the most popular new bluegrasses and predicted that Touchdown would be the best-selling bluegrass in 1979.

"The most revolutionary changes in turfgrass lately," McFarland noted, have been in the perennial ryegrasses. The revolution started with Manhattan in the early 1960s and has escalated in the past year or two, with many fine new varieties just released or about to be.

Of the fine fescues, McFarland said that "we really don't have any today for fine turf areas. In development, the ryegrasses are supposedly 20 years behind the bluegrasses, and fine fescues are 20 years behind the ryegrasses."

USGA Green Section Agronomist Carl Schwartzkopf gave a brief history of turf care, then went on to predict future developments. He foresees a number of things that will necessarily help to decrease energy, labor, and water costs: mowing equipment that rides on a cushion of air, remote radio-controlled maintenance equipment, and grass that tolerates drought, resists disease, discourages insect infestation, and maintains a dwarf size.

Some "equipment of the future" is beginning to show up on golf courses now, according to Carol Colein of Irrigation Design Associates in Royal Oaks, Mich. She explained that microprocessor chips are revolutionizing irrigation equipment just as they have pocket calculators, cash registers, and other electronic applications. The initial cost of conversion may seem high now, she said, but it will come down and microprocessor irrigation controllers will be much cheaper.

Massachusetts' show draws large crowds

About 1,350 attendees and 125 exhibitors took part in the 48th annual University of Massachusetts Turf Conference and Industrial Show at Springfield, Mass. in February. The highly attended golf

favorably to *Poa pratensis* (Kentucky bluegrass).

Although Duff did not advocate developing a selection program for *Poa annua*, he did say it may be time to give poa a "second look. Instead of trying to come up with a herbicide program that is going to completely eliminate poa," he said, "if you have the right type you may find you can live with it pretty well."

An informative discussion focusing on sand topdressing by Dr. Robert N. Carrow, a professor at Kansas State University in Manhattan, was also enthusiastically received by a large number of the attendees.

Carrow said there are many benefits to sand topdressing if it is done correctly, but he warned, "If you don't do it right, you're better off not doing it at all." Carrow said proper topdressing aids in thatch control, creates a better micro-environment for turf plants, smooths the turf's surface, and can



UPPER LEFT: Dr. Robert Carrow discusses sand topdressing. UPPER RIGHT: Dr. Thomas Duff recommends giving *Poa annua* a "second look." LEFT: George Cleaver, past president of the GCSAA.

course sessions featured a variety of topics ranging from professional ethics to more technical discussions of topdressing and *Poa annua*.

Dr. D. Thomas Duff, a professor at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, discussed his success in developing a sub species of *Poa annua* which is more perennial than typical *Poa*, withstands mowing at putting green height, tends to creep, and compares

be used to modify the soil surface.

Of all the topdressing mixes (high sand, pure sand, and low sand), the most effective is high sand, according to Carrow. "It has excellent physical properties, fairly good chemical properties, and good biological properties," he said. High sand mixes contain about 85 to 90 percent sand.

However, Carrow added that calcine clay or expanded shale can be substituted in the mix if sand is not available. "If you can't get a