Over the past year and a half, I’ve had the opportunity to travel to some pretty awesome places, meet some great people and play some amazing courses. The most memorable experience I’ve had since writing for Golfdom has to be the 2012 edition of the Golf Industry Show.

I’ve worked in the golf industry for more than a decade yet this was my first time attending the show — simply because I haven’t had the jack to attend, not to mention the clubs I’ve worked for weren’t willing to foot the bill. Vegas changed that for me. The GIS was everything I thought it would be, and more.

Hopefully you made your way around to the Golfdom booth to catch up with the crew and learn the location of the 2012 Summit. If you didn’t, you missed a rare sight… yours truly rocking a suit! It was Vegas, after all.

The first thing I saw when I hit the trade show floor was one of the latest and greatest spray rigs, complete with boom enclosure. I knew then and there I was going to have a great week. Call me crazy, but I’m more comfortable sitting on a spray rig than on the softest Italian leather sofa.

The bottom line is, when I have a convention center filled with the newest innovations in golf course maintenance to peruse at my leisure, that’s as good as it gets in my book. While I don’t have enough time or magazine space to fill you in on everything I saw, I do want to share a few products that caught my eye for those of you who couldn’t make the trip.

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ezLocator
Superintendents owe it to themselves to check out this product. Basically, ezLocator (goezlocator.com) is a technology-based program that lets a superintendent choose his pin location in advance, ensuring that, regardless of who’s changing cups, the pin is placed in an exact predetermined location. It’s great technology to use if you have a maintenance issue on a green, want to isolate a problem area or have a special event and want to ensure that a portion of the green is avoided. ezLocator is a great tool to help improve your putting surface quality.

E-Z-Go
My stop at the E-Z-Go booth was among my GIS highlights. I got to size up the new and improved Cushman golf course maintenance vehicles. They are a definite improvement over the old-school three-wheeled Truckster with a sweet three on the tree. If you are too young to have had the privilege of driving a three-wheeled, three on the tree Truckster, hit me up some time. I still happen to have one! The new version of Cushman’s maintenance vehicles are top notch and include options such as gas or electric drive train, 4WD, and even independent 4-wheel suspension. Cushman has definitely leapt into the 21st century with these new and improved vehicles.

Club Car
Club Car had one of my favorite products at the GIS, the Guardian SVC option for your golf cart fleet. It allows you to tailor your golf carts to your course and needs. You can even program a speed limit so carts automatically slow down in certain areas of the course. You can manage the speed of your entire fleet or just a few carts. The Guardian SVC also can power down carts when they enter restricted areas or limit them to cart paths after a storm.

The “lockdown” mode feature caught my attention most. Lockdown mode will prevent break-ins and the damage they cause to your course and your fleet. I personally have had my golf carts driven off a cliff, into a pond in the middle of the night. So, I absolutely see the benefit of this product.
Hendo wasn’t the only one who had major fun at the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas.

We’re excited that Golfdom senior editor Beth Geraci had the fastest time in Direct Solutions’ NASCAR race simulator competition for turf media. She was 4 seconds faster than her nearest competitor, Golfdom EIC Seth Jones. We now know who is driving the next time we carpool…

We’re less excited that Jones and Golfdom VP of sales Pat Roberts teamed up to be the worst “Superintendent Pyramid” team at the BASF booth (top picture, with Tom Hill of BASF.) After a fast start, the train derailed when Jones tried to get Roberts to guess the word “depression.” The clue he should have given? “It’s the feeling I’ll have immediately after this game!” But the two were still big winners, thanks to BASF generously making a donation of $1,200 to brain cancer research despite their brain-dead performance.

And lastly, we nabbed this pic of Herb Graffis Business Person of the Year award winner Paul Chojnacky at the Golfdom booth. Chojnacky proudly accepted the award during a presentation caught by Golfdom TV cameras. We’re looking forward to doing the whole thing again this year — be on the lookout for an announcement soon on the call for nominations for the 2013 edition.

You Win Some, You Lose Some

BASF

Most everyone knows BASF’s fungicide, Insignia SC, and its great broad-spectrum control of turf diseases. What not everyone knows, at least I didn’t, is Insignia also offers plant health benefits in the form of stress management. Benefits include drought/moisture, temperature extremes and mechanical stress such as aerification.

Research shows turf treated with Insignia has increased root length and density and primes the immune systems of plants before a stress event. In today’s economy a product that has positive bi-product jumps to the top of my list of essential products. I’m going to experiment with it this fall before aerification.

(Editor’s note: For more on this topic, check out “Plant Health Success Stories” on page 20.)

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In closing

That’s going to do it for this year’s edition of Hendo’s Hot List. Blame Jones for the photo of me holding fake fire. That was all his idea! But do check out these products if you haven’t already. I have a hard time wrapping my head around how far technology and product advancement have come during the past decade, not to mention the impact they are having on the golf course maintenance industry. And I can’t wait to see the new products and technological advances that the 2013 GIS will bring.

Matt Hendren is a superintendent with the city of Kansas City, Kan. In his spare time, he blogs for Golfdom and raises hell.