

GCBAAs Says “I Love New York,” Part Two—Insights for Superintendents

Editor’s Note: In our December 2005 issue, Sharon recapped the setting and speakers at the GCBAAs summer meeting, which took place in Jersey City, just outside New York City, in August. Here is more of Sharon’s recap, including highlights of great interest to golf course superintendents.

Opening remarks came from representatives of all facets of golf: Tommy Sasser, president of the GCBAAs; our own Steve Mona of the GCSAA; Tom Marzolf, ASCGA; Bob Scott of the ASIC; Mike Tinkey, NGCOA; Dave Oatis of the USGA; and Brian Whitcomb of the PGA of America. It was encouraging to see all of these organizations coming together to strengthen the integrity and growth of the golf industry.

These speakers presented some very interesting facts:

- Timeshares grew 16% in 2004 and golf, more than any other amenity, is the #1 item that sells timeshares.
- 4% of leisure travelers took a golf vacation, representing 2% of all vacations taken by Americans.
- 14% of active travelers are interested in playing golf while on vacation.
- Openings and closings of golf courses are about the same.
- Price increases of up to 15% are sticking.
- Shorter courses are becoming more popular.
- Golf memberships are now being packaged into the price of homes.
- Golf ball, golf glove and footwear sales are trending upward.
- Lifespan on the golf course: USGA greens 15-30 years; bunkers five-seven years; irrigation 15-25 years; mulch one-three years; tees 15-20 years.

We then heard how there are many different Web links and programs out there to encourage play and provide information on the status of the golf industry:

- Golf20/20.com provides insightful research addressing the future of golf.
- Playgolfamerica.com features a zip code search engine for golf courses.
- Linkup2Golf.com provides a “welcome to golf” for the new or infrequent adult player.
- Juniorlinks.com is a Web site and database for the junior golfer.
- EWGA.com concentrates on the executive women golfers.
- AccessGolf.org highlights courses for disabled golfers.

The summer 2005 meeting also featured panel discussions with golf course architects as well as one with representatives from oil companies, designers, manufacturers, distributors and contractors discussing “Rising Construction Costs.” This provided a very lively discussion on who runs up the bill the most.

Dave Oatis, the Northeast Section director for the USGA Green Section, gave a very informative speech on putting-green construction. His focus: Why do greens fail? He said a major reason why a lot of greens are rebuilt is because arborists originally designed them. Other facets that come into play: poor design, traffic flow, insufficient cupping area and surface drainage. The most important point

he made was that the golf course superintendent should be involved in selection of the rootzone mix since he/she will be the person who will have to maintain it. Go figure!

Another speaker who drew the audience’s attention was the keynote speaker, Carol Forrest, who works for GeoSyntec Consultants. She gave a very detailed speech on stormwater regulations for construction sites. It was amazing to hear how the EPA can fine up to **\$32,500 per violation per day** on a construction site. She shared several best management practices to help our builders avoid noncompliance and the possible ramifications it can cause.

The conference then moved to Royce Brook Golf Club in Hillsborough, NJ, where 120 players competed for a record number of contests and giveaways. After the tournament, it was back to Jersey City for the awards and a silent auction. More than \$5,000 was raised for the GCBAAs Foundation, the charitable arm that runs the “Sticks for Kids” program promoting the game of golf to our underprivileged youth.

The Golf Course Builders Association will once again be involved in one of the Solution Centers at the GIS. Last year, they were responsible for the “Building of the Green” Solution Center, which drew rave reviews from the attendees. If you are contemplating a course renovation or restoration or will be involved in a new course construction, you won’t want to miss this year’s “Constructing the Game” Solution Center. Areas to be covered are:

- Determining construction and renovation schedules.
- Interpreting the plan and methodology of layout.
- Installation of drainage.
- Construction of greens.
- Bunker reconstruction.
- Irrigation problems and solutions.
- Erosion-control problems and solutions.

Please plan on spending some time at this well-thought-out venue. As you can imagine, it takes a great deal of time and effort to put on these live demonstration centers. See you in Atlanta!

