

GOLF INDUSTRY SHOW

Golf is about Golfers

Greg Martin, *Martin Design Partnership, Ltd.*

I have been asked to provide a brief perspective on the 2008 Golf Industry Show. When I ponder the event, I can only reflect upon what was not there.

By its sheer size, this show is fascinating and remarkable. There were products that would reduce the amount of dew on turf, every conceivable type of construction or maintenance equipment, photographers and photographs, furniture and food, synthetic tees and synthetic golf (simulators), contractors, architects, and lots of chemicals. Mostly, there was a lot of anxiety.

What wasn't there was anything that would grow the game. Only one exhibit addressed the growth of the game: First Tee.

The game of golf has grown through demand, with little effort needed to establish or increase demand. Jack, Arnie, Tiger, Augusta, maintenance techniques, The PGA Tour, and ingenious architects have all contributed to golf's success and growth over the past two decades. Each of these industry sectors has improved the game. The industry may be growing, but the game is not expanding within our own borders. More and more we are reliant upon each other to buy, sell, and create the demand. The size of the GIS indicates a distorted reflection of all sectors of the industry. Just because the industry is big, doesn't mean it is healthy.

Without deep roots, golf cannot survive. This industry has been fed from an abundance of available resources without much competition. You know, as I do, that the health of an organism is based upon the health of the root structure. Right now, we have shallow roots, with more competition and fewer available nutrients. We need a more balanced diet.

Plain and simple:

- Without golfers there is no Golf Industry Show;
- Without golfers there is no golf industry;
- Without golfers, there is no golf.

What is really confounding is that we are all talking about it. Everyone at that event could discuss the problem, but only a select few are acting. We are distracted by conversations about length, challenge and yardage, beauty and ratings, green speed and turf color, swing speed and growing turf, but very little is devoted to growing golfers.

Let's stop talking about it. Let's improve the game by:

- **Funding** youth participation in a variety of methods;
- **Creating** opportunities for play; and
- **Promoting** the benefits of golf.



If we can grow deeper roots, then we will all benefit. If not, this game will become an industry.

My First Golf Industry Show



Brett Ziegler, *Assistant GCS, Knollwood Club*

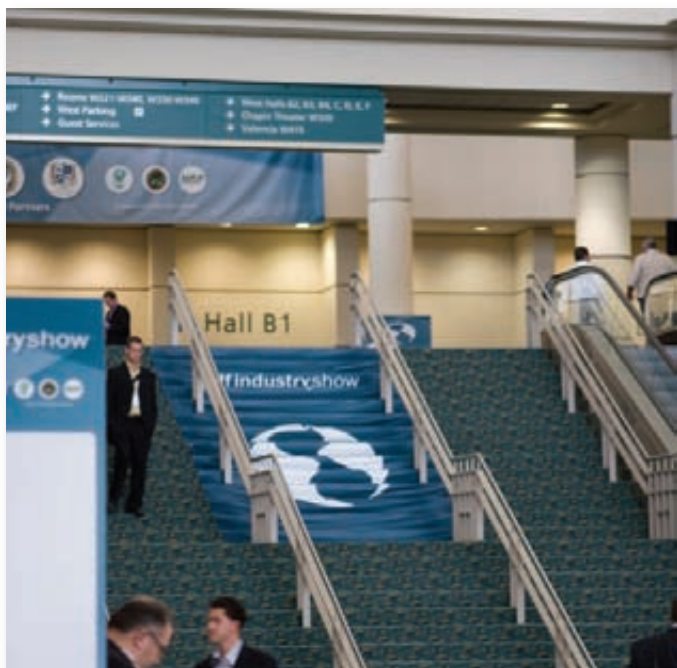
The 2008 Golf Industry Show at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, was the first show that I have ever attended. Many questions ran through my mind in the days leading up to it: Just how big is this thing? How long will it take to walk through it all? Did I bring shoes with enough cushioning? After walking the trade show floor, I discovered the answers to all of these questions. Huge! A long time! And No! More importantly, I discovered this is a rewarding event that I hope to visit every year.

You need a plan going into the trade show, especially if it's your first time. I knew that in order to efficiently cover the trade show floor, I would need to skim by some booths and focus on the ones I thought were important. Being a rookie, I was fortunate enough to receive advice from some industry show veterans. They told me the best way to cover the show was to start at one end and walk row-by-row until reaching the other end. This seems obvious, but it's easy to start wandering around aimlessly in an event of this magnitude. These same vets also warned me that I would not be able to cover the entire show in one day. Yeah right, I thought, I am twenty-four years old and in good physical shape. I will be able to cover the whole thing in three-four hours tops. What a rookie mistake that was.

After receiving advice and evaluating areas that I wanted to learn more about, I had a plan set: Start at one end of the show and walk row-by-row until covering the entire floor. Stop at booths that were appealing and pass by ones that were not.

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Stop at the four or five booths where I needed to talk with a rep about a specific product. Pick up new catalogs and information about products I am unfamiliar with. Get as much free stuff as possible. Finish the show within four hours. Go back to the hotel and relax in the hot tub.



Now to execute the plan. When I first walked through those front doors, the size of the show was a little overwhelming. I knew it was going to be big, but this was going to take some serious work to accomplish in four hours. Sticking with the plan, I started at one end and worked my way over row-by-row. My plan was actually running smoothly. I was picking up a lot of information, finding the booths that I needed to stop at,

and running into some familiar faces. I was making good time, and for a very brief moment, I expected to cover the entire show that day. But, five hours into my first day at the show, with about 2/3 of it covered, and my complimentary duffle bag now pushing 30 pounds, I called it a day. In my original estimate, I factored in neither the weight of that bag nor its strap digging into my shoulder. Lesson learned. After a brief visit to the bookstore, which by the way had an outstanding selection of golf industry related reading material, I went back to the hotel to relax in the hot tub.

The time in the hot tub allowed me to reflect on the events of the day: the construction of a teebox right before my eyes, discovering companies that I never knew existed, and products I had never heard of or even imagined. These were all new experiences and ideas for me. I then understood why the show is so popular. Why did nearly 25,000 people migrate to Orlando? To continue the learning process. Attending the show keeps you on the pulse of our industry. You see new products, equipment, and developing trends. You get an opportunity to expand your knowledge by enrolling in any of the numerous seminars offered. This show offers a wealth of information to anybody who is looking for it. It is an easy and enjoyable way to further your professional development and stay on the cutting edge of our profession. Simply put, attending the golf industry show is a wise career move.

The following day I went back to the trade show to finish what I had started. It sure was nice walking around with a brand new, light, Club Car/Contec DG bag. Did I mention that it was light? I was in a bit of a hurry that day, since I had to be at the airport by two, so I did a little more skimming through booths than on day one. However, after another two hours of meandering through the giant event, I was finally finished! At just over seven hours, I had nearly doubled my original estimate of the time that I thought it would take to cover the trade show floor. I guess the old veterans were right.

I could not have been more pleased with the entire experience. The trade show itself is the most talked about and anticipated event of the week, but the golf industry show as a whole has so much more to offer. From the vast number of seminars covering everything from agronomic issues, professional development, and management skills, to the networking opportunities and the chance to catch up with colleagues – not to mention the MAGCS hospitality suite – the golf industry show is the total package. If ever there was a Mecca for golf course superintendents, this would definitely be it. I look forward to seeing you all next year in New Orleans!

Musings from the Trade Show Floor (From Someone Who Saw ALL of It)

John Gurke, CGCS

Heading to the Orange County Convention Center with a mile-long laundry list of potential purchases to research, I was ready to do some major walking. I had done my due diligence before reaching Orlando by taking advantage of the GIS web site's floor plan and list of exhibitors. So, at least, my long walk would be efficient and well-planned. To re-quote Oscar Miles, I "planned my work and worked my plan."

My first impression upon entering the trade show was that it was crowded. Turns out a record 25,782 golf industry professionals attended (all numbers as of Saturday the 2nd). The 965 exhibitors commanded an all-time high of 300,900 square feet, leading to many other types of feet — sore, tired, sweaty, and perhaps a little stinky, too. My goal before me, I embarked on my tour, a methodical journey in the classic “cross cut double reverse thrust” technique made famous by such wily veterans as Ken Shepherd and Eddie Braunsky. While getting to my starting point from the entrance door, I made note of the booths with the super-thick carpeting that feels like a trampoline. These are the temporary oases where I can give my feet a break while feigning interest in the host exhibitor’s product.

One thing that made shopping for specific items (golf course accessories in my case) much more simple than in the past was that all exhibitors offering similar products were located fairly close to one another. This allowed for easy comparison of products and return visits to previously-patronized booths. So, I give that part of the trade show — the part that allowed me to accomplish my business efficiently — nothing but my highest mark.

Now with business taken care of, it was time to check out all that was new and cool. There were some theatrics, including a troupe of very high-energy cheerleaders and a big ugly Yeti. But these are expected. There was a whole corner of simulated golf, all-season practice mats, and artificial putting surfaces. That was pretty cool. There was that whole middle of the floor thing that had NASCAR cars (I’ll have to ask Harry Lovero if that’s the proper way to refer to them. Maybe they’re just NASCARs) and people making the fzzzrrzzzzt fzzzrrzzzzt noise with the air tools, the Pit Crew Challenge as it turned out to be. Most everyone had a new product to introduce. There was a tee built from scratch right there on the floor with real paspalum sod and real dirt and stuff. That was pretty cool, too. And I’ll tell you another thing. The “manager section” of the floor (where the distributors of clubhouse stuff, bar stuff, kitchen stuff, and all the other managery stuff) had some really cool things to see and do, just ask Kevin DeRoo. I actually ordered a part for one of our tow-behind blowers from a kitchen supply company. That’s another story. I got to see John Zimmers (superintendent of Oakmont Country Club) win the TurfNet 2007 Superintendent of the Year award in the Club Car booth. Go figure him winning that. I found that the golf car companies had brought their A-game, displaying a plethora of new and future technology, including runaway-proof cars, Smart Cars, SegWay cars, and even Club Car’s glimpse into the future with their no-emission hydrogen car. Very cool.

In the words of many, the show is what you make of it. I found the trade show to be an aspect of the show that did not disappoint. The stuff was out there to be found, and I found what I was looking for. The last thing that struck me as I left the floor for the last time on Friday afternoon was this: Walking for hours on end isn’t as easy as it used to be, but it doesn’t even compare to the poor folks who stand still for hours on end in their booths. Those are the real foot soldiers of the show and the people who make the trade show what it is. I enjoyed my time on the trade show floor — I conducted business; I met new people with whom I will conduct future business; I saw new things and talked with new folks; and I ran into more than a few old folks that I’ve known for years. Oh, and my feet hurt, but in a good way.



Two GIS pro's Renny Jacobson and Tracy Murphy have been to 24 consecutive conventions. Next year is silver.



Ed Braunsky, showing off an integral part of the “cross cut double reverse thrust” move while the vendor was distracted by the camera man.



Two more wily veterans, Tim Davis and Ed Fischer, CGCS take care of business on the trade show floor.

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All of the colors and textures you can choose to order the outdoor furniture. Aren't you glad our colors are determined by the manufacturer (red, green and orange)?

MAGCS Hospitality Room Photos



MAGCS Members Responsible for Prayer Breakfast at GIS

Since 1980 many of MAGCS members have been responsible for arranging and conducting the Prayer Breakfast at the Golf Industry Show. This year was no different, with several MAGCS members leading the way. **Tommy Witt, CGCS** in place of **Wally Fuchs**, started the morning by welcoming people of all Christian faiths and backgrounds to this "change of pace from the convention, and....to come together for fellowship, praise and inspiration."



Above: L- Tommy Witt starts the day (yes, he is on a chair) R - Ken Shepherd anchors with with a prayer and reading.



MAGCS members have been instrumental in the Prayer Breakfast at the GIS since its inception in 1980.

Ken Shepherd followed with a short prayer asking that God continue to keep watch over all and closed with a scripture reading. There was song by Chrissy Purcell followed by an inspirational talk by Tony McCoy, ex-NFL lineman and now Senior Pastor of Hope International Church in Florida. Tony conveyed the simple message to use the gifts God has given you and never give up, no matter.









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