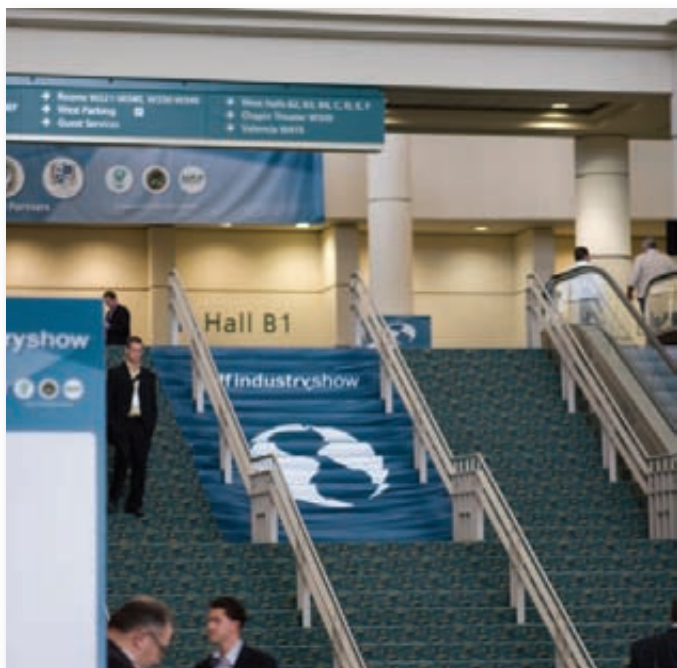


Stop at the four or five booths where I needed to talk with a rep about a specific product. Pick up new catalogs and information about products I am unfamiliar with. Get as much free stuff as possible. Finish the show within four hours. Go back to the hotel and relax in the hot tub.



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 fzzzrrrrzzzzt fzzzrrrrzzzzt 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.

(continued on next page)