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Joe Schneider, *Beverly Country Club*



# My Experience at Green Start

*In late September, 50 Assistant Superintendents from across the country and part of Canada gathered in North Carolina. They gathered for the 5th Annual Green Start Academy, a two and a half day conference hosted by Bayer and John Deere. To be considered for the Green Start Academy, one first had to complete an application that included a written essay. These essays were reviewed by a panel of Superintendents and Directors of Golf from across the country.*

During the conference, the Assistants attended talks given by turfgrass professors from the Michigan State and North Carolina State turf programs, representatives from GCSAA, John Deere and Bayer, and had roundtable discussions with superintendents from top clubs. These talks were held at the Bayer Development and Training Center in Clayton N.C. and were complimented by tours of John Deere's Turf Care factory in Fuquay Varina, N.C.

The conference started at the Bayer Development and Training Center with a talk from Dr. Tom Ruffy on the "Benefits to Managed Ecosystems". He included information about using effluent water effectively. This was followed by a talk from Dr. Grady Miller on "Water Management". He stressed being proactive with water usage and having a plan set up for droughts and/or mandated water reductions. Both gentlemen are professors at North Carolina State University. Next, we ventured outside to open discussions with Mr. Tracy Lanier and Mr. Brent Rinholm, representatives from John Deere, on "Hybrid Technology". They explained the current technology being used by John Deere in their hybrid mowers and answered questions about current and future hybrid use. Next, Dr. David Spak of Bayer spoke on photosynthesis and plant health and Mr. Mike Newnam also from Bayer, covered disease susceptibility. Both displayed and discussed experiments that were ongoing at their facility.

After lunch, we boarded a bus to John Deere's Turf Care Factory in Fuquay Varina, NC. There, we were given a tour of



*Experts from John Deere talked about hybrid technology applications in golf course equipment.*

the factory floor and shown the process of producing some of the equipment that we use on the course including the ProGator, Turf Gator, and 5-unit fairway and rough mowers. While at John Deere, we meet with Mr. Ronnie Johnson, the Plant Manager at John Deere Turf Care. He talked about the uniqueness of this factory and his management style. We then met with Mr. Steve Randall, GCSAA, to talk about "Career Development". Both talks were very open and very informative. To close out the night, we headed back to Bayer for a networking and socializing period and dinner. After dinner, Mr. Bob Farren, the

Grounds and Golf Course Manager at Pinehurst, talked about the ongoing renovation of Pinehurst Course 2. They are currently eliminating some of the expansion and changes done over the years to bring it back to its original layout.

The next day we started back at Bayer as Mr. Stan Zontek, of the USGA began by giving us an update on the state of his organization. Dr. Nick Hamon from Bayer followed by discussing "Sustainable Development". To finish out the morning, we had a tour of the test plots and four test holes located at the Bayer facility. We talked with some of the researchers about the plots and test topics. The facility is located in an area of the country that allows them to have both warm and cold season grasses for testing. We also had open discussions with Mr. Bob Farren from Pinehurst and with Mr. Ken Mangum, Director of Golf and Grounds at Atlanta Athletic Club. They told their



history and take on the golf industry and answered any questions that we posed.

After lunch we heard from Dr. Thom Nikolai, from Michigan State University, about balancing budgets, turfgrass health and customer satisfaction. He referred to current research that has been going on at MSU, including rolling and mowing frequency and chemical applications. He stated that failed communication was often times the biggest flaw that a superintendent battles. We closed out the day with a trip back to the Raleigh Durham Airport to head back to our respective clubs.

I feel very privileged to have been part of the Green Start Academy. The presentations were very informative and I know

everyone will take back something from the event. For me, the networking and discussions with fellow Assistant Superintendents was more important. It was great hearing from my peers on their struggles and successes. It was two days surrounded by people with the same goals and aspirations as I. It gave me a chance to see what was happening in other areas of the country. I highly recommend that anyone that has the opportunity to participate in upcoming Green Start Academy's do so. I would like to thank John Deere and Bayer for hosting the conference. I would also like to thank Keith Peterson and Beverly Country Club for allowing me the time away to participate in such an event. **-OC**



*Ken Mangum, Atlanta Athletic Club and Bob Farren, Pinehurst led discussions among the attendees and shared their experiences within the golf course industry.*

*Assistant Superintendents attend the Green Start Academy, taking a tour of the Bayer Development and Training Center in Clayton, N.C.*

