

# GUEST EDITORIAL

By Brad Kocher

I see, what I consider to be, a very unfortunate series of events in the turf industry — the “GimmickKing” of chemical product sales. Over the course of the past few months I have witnessed several chemical manufacturers getting into the “points for products” and “sweepstakes” programs to enhance chemical product sales.

The whole idea may have started innocently with points for research and/or product rebate, but has mushroomed into catalog items from smoke alarms, tools and even computers.

The part of the program that offends and insults me, is that as a golf course superintendent I feel that I deal legitimately for both service and price with my purveyors, which I feel is part of my job responsibility for the company that employs me. If I desire to buy a product, I find reputable companies to supply the product, and make a purchasing decision based on a price/service factor. Now, if I wish to buy XYZ fungicide, am I now supposed to figure who kicks back the best prize? That's supermarket sales.

The sad part is, that even if I do not participate, and I will not participate in the program, my price of chemicals will be affected. Companies do not give away prizes free gratis. Sweepstakes and prize programs must be funded, advertised, points accumulated and prizes awarded. It all costs dollars.

I do not need prizes. If I need two-way radios and have the money, I'll buy them. If my company needs a microwave, or desk furniture, or a computer, they'll buy it. Don't ask superintendents or for that matter anyone who works for a company to make purchasing decisions based on prizes or awards.

I believe if a product sales organization wishes to show its customers they are concerned for their industry, there are other alternatives. A simple donation to turf research from a conscientious company, based on their sales, say in the State of Florida in 1983 for turf products, would be very receptive. It would not compel people to buy products to get a specific prize, but it would steer business to a chemical company that is concerned for the future of the turf industry and those who work in that industry.

Points for sales should not even be a determinate. Simply keep track of how many gallons or pounds of X herbicide are sold and donate a dollar percentage to the research industry. A lot of work has been done lately to encourage turf research in Florida and contributions in that area are welcome.

Another incentive would be monetary rebates to companies, as some chemical companies have already done, and I emphasize *company* rebates. If I buy 1500 pounds of a certain chemical, and a chemical company rebates 3 cents a pound, the check should only go to my company — not an individual. Programs such as this would encourage sales and discourage dishonesty.

I can understand how some programs get started in industries where people are self-employed. If I own a business and wish to participate in programs that offer me gifts or free travel, then it is my prerogative whether I deal with a specific company. The prices I pay to a supplier and the ensuing benefits are totally my choice and I would reap the benefits, and accordingly, pay the price.

However, most golf course superintendents are employed by companies or greens committees. We do not pay the bills, we only authorize payment. It is not in my best interest to reap the benefits of giveaway programs, and I would hate to think that my company would frown on, or be suspicious of, my dealings with companies that offer kickbacks — even as reputable as those companies may be. I want to buy products that are high quality, at a good price, from a dependable supplier.

I do not believe sales organizations should leave to chance questions concerning the integrity or motives among people with whom they deal. Individuals who work for corporations are compensated. If purchasing is part of their job description, it should be done with price and service as the primary consideration. If my company wishes to reward me for conscientious buying, let *them* do it.

I am not seeking to place blame, however, a win-win situation can, and should be created by the marketing organizations. Nobody should be a loser. ■