

In February, the greatest show on turf comes to Orlando in the form of the GCSAA's 67th Annual International Conference and Show. Though presented by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, nearly all of golf's allied

associations will be participating, making this event the largest and most comprehensive program staged for those involved in the design, construction, maintenance or operation of a golf facility.

## Seizing the opportunity to learn

### Mark My Words



*Mark Jarrell*

Mark Jarrell, CGCS  
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There is no better opportunity available for learning the new issues, products, regulations and technology affecting our industry, or for brushing up on agronomic fundamentals. We expect a good turnout among Florida's golf course superintendents, since it's in our own backyard, but what about those who don't attend? What are their reasons for missing this opportunity, or various other seminars and educational programs available to them throughout the year?

If you ask them, various reasons are given — many of them quite legitimate — but it is my feeling that in most cases, the reason stated is a convenient rationalization, that the truth has more to do with their club's attitude about their attendance than with any authentic impediment. If a club discourages a superintendent from taking the time and/or money on educational

opportunities, no matter how subtly, the superintendent is likely to quit asking. Who wants to cause friction or drive a wedge between themselves and management? No one! So superintendents don't go to this or that function because they "had to fertilize tees that afternoon" or "had an irrigation problem" or any number of other excuses that obscure the fact that management at their club has little understanding or respect for what a superintendent does.

How else can it possibly be explained? If a club official does not encourage and support his superintendent's attendance at educational programs, he obviously does not understand what a dynamic industry the golf business is and how much there is to know. The business of being a professional golf course superintendent is a lifelong learning experience, and none of us can claim to know it all. I really believe that many people think that all our problems are spelled out in some golf course maintenance "cookbook," and that all we have to do to provide flawless playing conditions is look it up under the appropriate chapter.

When was the last time your golf pro called to discuss the pros and cons of using growth regulators, or your club manager informed you of new EPA regulations affecting your operation, or your green committee chairman knew what a VFD pump station was before you recommended installing one? Superintendents know that they have the most technical and diverse range of responsibilities in the golf course operation, but other decision makers may not. Maybe you've just been too darn busy to do a good selling job on the benefits of attending seminars and conferences and the absolute necessity

of continuing education, or maybe you're just too tired of fighting for adequate funding of your operation to argue for money to attend a conference and show.


For the budget-conscious official who questions the wisdom of spending the money to send his superintendent to the GCSAA's main event, equipment selection invariably provides the financial justification he is seeking. Where else can you evaluate all the available equipment under one roof? Most golf courses now carry about a \$500,000 equipment inventory and spend over \$40,000 a year to maintain and repair it. Just one trade show-based enlightened decision justifies the superintendent's travel expenses.

Another advantage of the GCSAA conference and show is the expertise of the manufacturer's reps who attend these shows. They can explain things that local distributors cannot. While the information is still fresh in your mind, you can walk over to a competitor's booth and make a valid comparison. And there are always show specials to save you money if you are able to make a purchasing decision.

For some of us, the best part of the annual conference and show is the positive mental effect it has upon us. It is very satisfying to attend an event of this magnitude that is focused upon us as professionals and primary customers. It is stimulating to share ideas with peers and hear how they have developed new ways to solve old problems. You return from the show refreshed

and renewed, better able to handle the demands of your job.

You are cheating yourself and your club by not attending several such educational opportunities each year. A good superintendent knows when he can and can't get away from his golf course and should be the one to make that decision. If you're one of those

superintendents who feels pressure to stay at home, or is outright denied the opportunity, show the schedule and conference agenda to the one giving resistance. Invite him or her to participate with you. Once they see the scope and quality of the GCSAA conference and show, it should be hard to refuse you in years to come. 

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I can recall the memory of thousands of sunrises and far too many sunsets.

I track the morning dew with herds of white tailed deer and flocks of wild turkeys.

I play hide and seek with the Barred owl and the Red-tailed hawk.



*"I can recall the memory of thousands of sunrises..."*

I watch in fascination the diving osprey and the soaring eagle.

I surprise sunning alligators and turtles as they splash into lakes.

I remove any number of serpents from harm's way or from creating harm.

I yield the pathways to the grey squirrel and brown rabbit making a dash for cover.

I feel frustration and contempt for those misguided souls who still call me "polluter."

I am a constant student of my craft. Learning from my peers and from turf specialists at national conferences, regional seminars and local chapter meetings.

I am a manager of resources. A leader. A planner. A team player.

I am a jack of all trades. From agronomist to zoologist.

I am counselor and disciplinarian to the unmotivated.

I am friend and mentor to those who earn my respect.

I am the receiver of the proverbial

buck. It always stops here!

I try to balance demands and expectations with budgets and reality.

I am challenged to please all golfers from scratch to 36 handicaps on the same day.

I am the expert problem solver unless my practical experience and classroom knowledge differs from the opinion of the purse holders or the nay sayers.

I often have as much job security as the next difference of opinion.

I court Mother Nature and often win her favor.

I have seen her wrath and seemingly capricious destruction beyond comprehension.

I am ironically held accountable for torrential rains and unrelenting drought.

I am expected to somehow turn muck and clay into sandy loam.

I bear red scaly cancerous patches on my skin from an on-going love/hate relationship with the sun. The dirt under my finger nails and the callouses on my hands have been earned in honest toil.

I dodge more lightning bolts and taste more rain drops than I should admit.

I still thrill to the grandeur of the changing seasons from spring buds to fall frost.

I meet some of the finest and most interesting people on earth in my work.

I seem to be driven by myself or others to deliver perfection in an imperfect world. No one seems to understand this paradox except those who walk in my shoes.

I am The Superintendent.

## Green Side Up



*Joel D. Jackson*

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