



Advantages of 'going spikeless' touted at USGA Seminar in Orlando

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

From spikeless golf shoes to genetically pure turfgrass, the USGA Regional Seminar in Orlando had something for everybody. Good news and bad news. If you want to make a dramatic improvement to your greens inexpensively and quickly, then go spikeless! That was the gist of Chris Hartwigger's presentation.

The total book may not have been written on the long-range effects of spikeless golf shoes, but one thing is for sure: 1500 clubs — public and private — across America are gambling that it's the right thing to do. The most successful converts are at clubs that do their homework and educate the members well before issuing any ultimatums banning steel spikes.

Splitting the practice putting green in half and allowing only spikeless on one side and steel spikes on the other seems to be one of the most dramatic demonstrations to compare the effects of spike vs. spikeless in a simple, definitive way.

Other highlights

- **Creating a Master Landscape Plan** - John Ribes, Landscape Architect of J. Roland Lieber, P.A. illustrated the importance of a landscape that enhances the golf experience from aesthetics to shot values and safety. Poorly planned



John Foy, Director of the Florida Region of the USGA Green Section, moderated the USGA Regional Seminar held in Orlando this past April. (Janlark file photo)

landscaping can interfere with air circulation, sunlight, irrigation, traffic flow and run up labor costs.

- **Protecting Natural Resources** - Dr. Charles Peacock, Professor of Turfgrass Science at North Carolina State University, calling for some ecology course requirements in future Golf Turf Management curriculums at programs around the country. Since environmental issues have grown in importance in our industry, maybe we should be training superintendents to better understand the total relationships and impacts of golf and the environment. 85% of the public doesn't care about golf, but they do care about drinking water. Risk Assessment. Common Sense. Best Practices. "Nature never breaks her own laws!"

- **Indian River Club and Audubon** - Bobby Ellis, CGCS, and Robert Swift, General Manager, took the group on a proactive trip on getting a development permitted and then devoted to an environmentally sensitive way of life. And guess what? It pays financial dividends and that makes for a win-win situation for everyone.

- **Paspalum, The Right Choice for the Environment** - Dr. Ronnie Duncan, Turfgrass Breeder, UGA revealed the many attributes of paspalum grass varieties that can perform in less-than-ideal conditions. A grass that welcomes low heights of cut, performs well in poor soils and can tolerate higher water salinity. Definitely a grass with a future niche in our world of limited resources. Major challenge - managing thatch. May be a price worth paying.

- **New High Quality Bermudagrass for Golf Courses** - Dr. Wayne Hanna, Research Geneticist, USDA presented a look at the new generation of bermudagrasses that are being selected in response to requests and demands for better performance under lower cutting heights.

- **Purchasing Genetically Pure Turfgrass** - Dr. Earl Elsner, Director Georgia Seed Development Commission, did a lot to explain the difference between mutations and contamination that have caused so much controversy lately. A rigorous state turf certification policy that is enforced will maximize the odds of a customer getting the turf he orders, but once the breeder foundation stock is planted, the turf is at the mercy of man and machine. Contamination is more of a risk than mutation and it can come from a variety of sources.

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