



Planting and cutting-in the "ultradwarf" sprigs at the Olde Florida test green. Note the separation boards. Photo by Darren Davis.

Are 'ultradwarfs' the answer?

The excitement is certainly understandable with the years of struggling that many superintendents have gone through with contaminated or mutated turfgrass.

BY DARREN J. DAVIS
*Golf Course Superintendent
Olde Florida Golf Club*

In life, sometimes there are things that are just too good to be true. Most likely, we have all experienced this scenario at some point in time. With this said, there are some people that would have you believe that the new "ultradwarfs" or "vertical dwarfs" are a new wonder grass that will make us all heroes with our golfers.

Well, more than ever golf course superintendents in the south are in need of a "magic crystal ball" so that we can determine the destiny of these new, putting green grasses. These new grasses have cer-

tainly created quite a stir and superintendents all over the south are talking about them. The excitement is certainly understandable with the years of struggling that many superintendents have gone through with contaminated or mutated turfgrass.

Since these new ultradwarfs have been grown in test plots around the country for several years, it is certainly safe to say they can succeed in some situations. I have even personally seen three of these new varieties look outstanding, at certain times of the year.

But there have been some negative things seen dealing with stress, overseeding transition, and thatch accumulation. Therefore, it may be wise to allow some time for these new bermudagrass to be

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tested in "real life" situations.

Since testing of these new bermudagrasses on actual "in play" golf course greens has been very limited, the Everglades Chapter of the FGCSA in conjunction with Olde Florida Golf Club planted a test green on August 20, 1997.

The green was planted by Olde Florida Golf Club turf maintenance staff under the supervision of a committee of people including John Foy, director, Florida Region USGA; Raymond Snyder, University of Florida (Dr. John Cisars' assistant); Roy Bates, immediate past president, Florida Turfgrass Association; and myself.



But there have been some negative things seen dealing with stress, overseeding transition, and thatch accumulation.

Dr. J. V. Krans, professor, Mississippi State University, and Dr. Wayne Hanna, geneticist, USDA/ARS both of whom are also on the committee helping to oversee this project, were unable to attend. However, both of these scientists reviewed the planting protocol and provided valuable input.

All four ultradwarfs — FloraDwarf, TifEagle, MS-Supreme and Champion — arrived at Olde Florida on August 19, or 20. The material was shipped via airfreight, Federal Express or trucked in (FloraDwarf). It is our determination that all of the material arrived in similar condition.

Earl Elsner, director, Georgia Seed Development Commission, provided input on the method of sprig measurement to assure equal amounts of all the varieties were planted on the test green. It was our determination that the FloraDwarf was delivered with a quantity closest to our desired sprig rate of twenty bushels; it was also the least amount delivered of the four. Therefore, the quantity of FloraDwarf we had on hand was the standard used to decide the total volume of sprigs planted of each variety.

The method of sprig measurement used is as follows: Sprigs were put in a five-gallon bucket until it was half full. A tray of weights was then used to compress the

sprigs in the container. The remainder of the bucket was then filled and compacted again. Finally, the full bucket was weighed and the remaining nine buckets that were filled with sprigs (10 total) were weighed to assure we had ten equal containers of sprigs.

Although the four varieties all weighed different amounts (due to variances in soil or moisture content), it is our judgment that each variety was planted in very close volume amounts, at a rate that is standard in the industry (20-25 bushels/ 1000 sq.ft.).

After each variety was placed in the ten containers they were transported to the green and dispersed by hand evenly on the two predetermined plots. The green had been separated the day before into eight equal-width plots so that each of the four varieties could be planted in duplicate strips.

Care was taken in the planting process to ensure no material was accidentally placed on another variety's plot. Immediately after the sprigs were placed on the greens surface, they were manually sliced in using a dull, flat-pointed shovel. Several employees performed this task in an attempt to "cut in" as much of the material as possible.

Prior to placing the next turfgrass variety into the ten buckets, all of the containers were thoroughly cleaned with water. The floor that we were working on, inside the turf maintenance facility, was also swept and then blown clean.

Prior to planting, the plots were tem-

Growing in the test plots. Guillermo Gomez hand-mows the plots after the sprigs take hold. Photo by Darren Davis

porarily physically separated with plywood that was installed six inches below, and extended six inches above the surface of the green. This helped keep the varieties separated during the planting process and also the grow-in. It did create some hardships with the grow-in but it was believed to be crucial in keeping the individual plots "pure".

After all four varieties were planted and cut in, the green was irrigated to seal the surface. An irrigation program was immediately installed in the controller to keep the surface moist at all times during daylight hours.

This irrigation program remained in place until the turf was sufficiently tacked down. Once the turf was tacked down a vibratory mechanical compactor plate was used to smooth the surface. Care was taken to assure the machine did not transport any material between plots.

Prior to planting the turfgrass, Milorganite (6-2-0) was applied at 5 pounds of N/1000 sq.ft. and Scott's Starter Fertilizer (19-26-5) was applied at 1 pound P/1000 sq.ft.. Both materials were worked in to the soil by a mechanical trap rake.

After planting, Lesco Ammonium Sulfate (21-0-0) was applied weekly at 1 pound of N/1000 sq.ft.. Also applied weekly on a different day of the week was the 19-26-5 at 1 pound of P/1000 sq.ft.. This fertility program remained in place until the turf was well established.

When the sprigs had sufficiently tacked down, a Toro GR 1000 greens mower was used to mow the plots. The initial bench setting on the GR 1000 was .300. This was lowered gradually as the turf allowed.

We probably could have begun mowing sooner but we were very concerned about dislodging sprigs from the surface of the green and possibly transporting them to other plots. In the mowing process, to be extra cautious, both plots of each variety were mowed and the mower was then thoroughly washed clean prior to mowing the next variety.

The basket was also used to ensure no material was physically thrown over the plywood barrier into another plot. Each time the turfgrass was cut with the greens mower, a Red Max hand-held reciprocator was used to cut the turf next to the

board where the mower was unable to cut. After the mowing began, the green was also rolled numerous times with a riding greens mower to help smooth the surface.

After 6 weeks of growing, a triplex vertical mower was used to groom the plots and help encourage lateral growth. Again, we probably could have performed this process sooner if the green were a mono-stand. Each variety was vertically mowed separately. Immediately after the vertical mowing, the plots were cut with a greens mower (with the basket attached) to help clean up debris on the surface.

The plots were also blown clean. Prior to beginning the next variety, the machine was cleaned thoroughly. All of the plots were also carefully inspected prior to being vertically mowed for any material that may have been transported from another plot. In this process the plywood certainly enabled us to keep the material separate.

The plywood remained in place until the plots were close to 100 percent filled in. This was to assure that there would be no open spaces for runners to encroach into the adjacent plot. We are comfortable that by having the boards in place during the grow-in, there will be very little merging of the varieties unless one variety is dominant or one is severely weakened by stress or by some other factor.

The last step in the establishment of the new test green was the installation of the Greens Encroachment Barrier System to keep out any encroachment from the surrounding fairway and rough "Tift 94" bermudagrass.

With the grown-in now complete, we have determined that there are no unusual facts to report on the establishment of the four varieties from sprig material.

They all appear to grow in at about the same rate. Although Tifdwarf is not included in the test, it appears that there is little difference in the grow-in rate from sprigs of the four "ultradwarfs" compared to Tifdwarf.

The only difference in the establishment of the individual plots on the test green was that the varieties whose sprigs

were delivered a little "clumpier" took hold a little better. I do not feel that this is the "norm" but in our situation we were unable to utilize a mechanical sprig slicer because of the placement of the above-ground plywood barrier. Instead the sprigs were manually sliced-in with shovels.

Had we been able to achieve better soil/sprig contact across the entire plot it would have certainly resulted in better survival of the sprigs. For example, the varieties that were "shredded" were unable to be 100% sliced in and consequently some of the sprig material that remained on top (with no roots or soil), dried out before the turf was able to take hold.

Obviously the greater percentage of material that is worked into the soil, the better the survival rate will be. There was not a huge difference in the four varieties but some difference in this regard was noticeable. This is in no way a negative for any of the varieties. They all appear to grow in at about the same rate.

Turfgrass managers in the south are keeping their fingers crossed that these new varieties are successful. However, many experts feel there is a need for caution.

In the November/December 1997 issue of the *USGA Green Section Record*, John Foy (USGA agronomist) wrote, "The development and introduction of new bermudagrass cultivars holds great promise for warm-season golf courses. However, some patience needs to be exercised. The new bermudagrasses have not been thoroughly evaluated in replicated putting green and fairway trials

"A number of questions still need to be answered regarding the stress- and pest-tolerances of these grasses over a wide range of locations. Furthermore some of the new putting green bermudagrass cultivars exhibit a faster rate of thatch production."

To me, this is an accurate assessment of where we are at now with the new grasses. There will be some leaders that will take a slight gamble and plant these new turfgrasses, but only with time will we know the long-term success with the new ultradwarfs.

Letters..

...to the Editor

Thanks for article

Joel,

Your article was fantastic! The pictures are beautiful. We are all very proud of Joe and our golf course. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Jon McMillin

General Manager, Winter Pines GC

Response

Jon,

You're welcome. It was an easy story to write having known Joe, the man and the superintendent all these years. Did I forget to mention I once shot five over par on Winter Pines when it was a par 63? Maybe I'm biased. From all of us, thank you for being an owner who understands the business and participates in getting things done.

Superintendent - Vendor Relationships

Dear Mark,

While attending the joint meeting of the Treasure Coast and Palm Beach GCSA's in Hobe Sound, I was moved by your comments in regards to the FTGA state show and its lack of participation by members. I was so moved that I decided to write a letter and volunteer myself if vendor comments or committee participation is wanted.

Today I read your "Afterwords" articles in the Fall issue of the Florida Green and realized the time to write is, NOW! Maybe I am not as well read as I should be but I felt this was one of the first published articles to put some sutures in an open wound. The relationship between superintendents and vendors has become more financial than professional.

Your joint meeting comments and article have a strong correlation and it falls back to finances. All of our organizations need financial support for existence. Golf course vendors need sales to continue their financial support. If we bury our heads in our USGA spec greens and don't address the problems

at hand, we will lose what's left of our professional relationships.

Mark, when someone of your caliber and respectability within his profession sends out a cry for help, we all know it's time to come to the table and try to work things out.

On behalf of all vendors I want to thank you for the articles. It should awaken all parties concerned that we can solve this problem as soon as we address it. The same Fall issue also showed us that Joe Ondo plans to provide leadership that welcomes questions on things we don't like or understand.

If you feel we are thinking along the same lines please call me and we can plan a method to get ourselves to the next level.

It will probably be a little more difficult to organize a group of vendors as we are also competitors, but when our professionalism is at stake, I am sure a good representation can be formed.

Respectfully,
Mark A. Atherholt
Pro Greens Turf Services

Seeking Help for Fairy Ring Control Research

I recently published a popular article on Fairy Ring Control, Preliminary Observations in the Florida Turf Digest, Sept/Oct. 1997, pages 26 - 27. In this article, we (John Cisar and I) discussed the symptomatology of fairy ring, causal agents of fairy ring, unknown factors that influence the development of the ring type and control.

Our focus on control was chemical although cultural practices also may influence ring development. In this study, we evaluated two fungicides (Heritage and ProStar) and a wetting agent (Aqueduct) for their curative effects in reducing the visual symptoms of the ring. Although we were able to reduce the ring with one of the fungicides, it is too early to tell if this will always be the case.

This was one experiment in one location, during one season.

I would like to continue with product testing for trying to curatively control fairy ring. Since I, and many other researchers do not know how to artificially induce fairy ring in the field at will, it would be very difficult to effectively evaluate fungicides and other products for preventative control at this time. However, with superintendents providing sites on golf courses where fairy ring is presently a problem (now or in the future), we could design experiments to evaluate curatively many of the products that are being sold for fairy ring control more vigorously.

If you are in agreement I would appreciate hearing from you. I can be reached at University of Florida IFAS - Everglades Research and Education Center, Belle Glade, Phone 561-996-3062 ext 148, FAX - 561-996-0339, E-mail - LEDA@GNV.IFAS.UFL.EDU.

Lawrence P. Datnoff
Associate Professor of Plant Pathology
University of Florida

Famous Golf Quotes

- "Golf is a compromise between what your ego wants you to do, what experience tells you to do, and what your nerves let you do."
-Bruce Crampton
- "My best score is 103, but I've only been playing 15 years."
-Alex Karras, former NFL defensive lineman and actor
- "What other people may find in poetry or art museums, I find in the flight of a good drive - the white ball sailing up into the blue sky, growing smaller and smaller, then suddenly reaching its apex, curving, falling and finally dropping to the turf to roll some more, just the way I planned it."
-Arnold Palmer
- "For most amateurs the best wood in the bag is the pencil."
-Chi Chi Rodriguez

Clippings

Pesticides said to pose little danger

Editor's Note: This didn't make page one like the unfounded scare with Alar on apples, but I did find these results and recommendations from a panel of cancer experts on page 11 of the Nov. 14, 1997 Orlando Sentinel. Post it and share it with your co-workers and club members.

ATLANTA (Associated Press) — The trace amounts of pesticides on fruits and vegetables pose practically no risk of cancer to people, an expert panel says.

In fact, the danger was found to be so small that it would actually be riskier to stop eating fruits and vegetables.

"A diverse diet that has plenty of fruits and vegetables is very important in reducing cancer," said Dr. Clark Heath of the American Cancer Society. "Compared to that, the risk of cancer from man-made chemicals is negligible."

Pesticides are thought to be toxic to people in large and frequent doses, but most people are exposed to them only in tiny amounts in fruits and vegetables.

Nonetheless, public fear prompted the panel of cancer experts to form in 1994 and review at least 50 published studies on pesticides to find out whether there was cause for alarm. The studies were published between 1981 and 1996.

For the average person, there's nothing to fear, the panel said in a published in the journal *Cancer*.

The American Cancer Society recommends people eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day to help reduce their risk of esophagus cancer by 90 percent, their risk of colon cancer by 50 percent and their risk of breast cancer by 27 percent.

Quote

"Competitive golf is played mainly on a 5-1/2 inch course, the space between your ears." -

Bobby Jones

Viewpoint...

Lack of environmental information can make you surprisingly gullible

BY DAVID B. LONG, CGCS

Lakeview G. C., Ardmore, Okla.

As a golf course superintendent, I like to think that I'm doing my part to protect the environment. We have worked hard to change the image of the "greenskeeper" and to educate people about what it takes to be a golf course superintendent.

Our job is more than growing grass. It's our responsibility to protect golfers, animals, watersheds and trees. We need to think what the land we care for will be like when we leave it.

New laws change our working conditions almost daily. New products and chemicals hit the market almost as fast. Do you take time to educate yourself about new products? Have you overheard someone say a particular product or chemical is bad for the environment, and before checking it out or researching the product, you just agree and discontinue its use? It's our goal — and our duty — to protect the environment as much as we possibly can. Part of this duty is staying informed. I ran across a story (author unknown) that illustrates this point so well I thought I would share it.

A freshman won first prize at a city science fair last spring. He was attempting to show how conditioned we have become to the alarmists practicing junk science and spreading fear of everything in our environment. In his project he urged people to sign a petition demanding the strict control or total elimination of the chemical "hydrogen hydroxide." The chemical:

- Causes excessive sweating and vomiting
- Is a major component in acid rain
- Causes severe burns in its gaseous state
- Kills when accidentally inhaled
- Contributes to erosion
- Decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes
- Has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients

The student asked 50 people if they supported a ban of the chemical. Forty-three said yes, six were undecided and only one knew what the chemical was.

The title of his prize-winning project was, "How Gullible Are We?"

He believes the conclusion is obvious. So, 43 of 50 people polled wanted to ban hydrogen hydroxide. I believe we would be in a lot of trouble if we decided to ban or discontinue the use of products or chemicals just because their names sound terrible or we have failed to do our research. Where would we be if we banned hydrogen hydroxide? We'd be without water. It makes you think, doesn't it?

Editors Note: This Viewpoint column from the November 1997 *Golf Course Management* magazine was just too good to pass up. It relates directly to the concerns in the cancer risk article and the scare tactics of environmental extremists.

The Heat is On

Don't all golf course superintendents figure that a break from the hectic routine is in order... After busting our cans all season long... we deserve a few weekends off during some nice weather, don't we?

BY PAT NORTON, GCS
Nettle Creek CC
Morris, Illinois

Editor's Note: Good writing and a hearty passion and understanding of our business is not limited by geography. Please enjoy the scenery and perspective in a fellow superintendent's article I read and enjoyed in the November/December 1997 issue of Wisconsin GCSA's, The Grass Roots.

The fact of the matter is that it's now early October down here in north central Illinois, and the heat is on... quite literally, the heat is on... to the point of being 85°F for many days running this past week!

So now we're facing a warm spell that is nothing but pure enjoyment... pure enjoyment in being outdoors every day... all day... on a gorgeous golf course that's not under any stress whatsoever!

This is beautiful growing and working weather... dusky, crisp early mornings are actually moonlit for the first hour of the work day. Then the sun warms us all up for the remainder of the day... by five or six p.m. a hint of evening chill is in the air, followed by enjoyable evening weather and star filled skies each night.

An open golf course like ours does have its autumn advantages. Because of its open nature, lots of the golf course can be seen in a panoramic instant. Given the fact that our course has what might be called a flat, 'prairie' look... getting up on a high greenside mound counts here for a 'bluff top vantage point'.

Our course is also extremely spread out, which makes it possible to check things out way out there about 3/4 mile away. "Hey, that little red dot in the distance is one of our guys mowing greens

on the back nine... I think"... Beautiful green bent fairways wind down through the property... contrasting vividly with the colors of the changing leaves and the surrounding farm fields. Green and tee complexes look so good... so interconnected to each other because of the vivid colors.

Top off these great fall days with the unseasonably warm weather as of late and a busy aerification work schedule and it's easy to see why the weeks are flying by so quickly.

Like most golf courses, there's way too much to do and too few people available this time of year. So, in addition to the weather being so nice and warm, the heat is on in another respect... getting finished with all of the fall cultural tasks before the weather collapses and November takes over...

Don't all golf course superintendents figure that a break from the hectic routine is in order during October? After 'busting our cans' all season long... we deserve a few weekends off during some nice weather, don't we? Do we always have to wait until the golf course closes for the season and the snow begins to fly before we can slide out of town for the weekend? If so, what a warped and inbred life we all lead!

Overall though, the degree of this heat is way mild compared to the heat of battle this past summer. I don't know much about the Wisconsin summer of '97, but we out here on the hot flatlands experienced some really dry, but very golfable weather for essentially two months stretching from mid-June through mid-August.

Our roughs became dry, hard-baked wastelands during that period, while the daily battle to keep the irrigated

areas fully green and functional wore us all down by the end of August.

These two months were just full of irony for our public course. The course was seriously suffering from lack of rain-fall... the agronomic troops were starting to lose their resolve... while the golfers just kept coming and coming, resulting in some very happy ownership faces as they reviewed financial figures for the summer... and as usual, the battle to keep the golf course looking good... the golf staff functioning smoothly... and the golfers happy... was somewhat taken for granted!

Being taken for granted comes with this business, I think, so it doesn't do any good to complain.

So, with age comes a little bit of experience on how to deal with things when the heat is really on... and I fully realize that while it's nice to get verbal compliments on the condition of the golf course... the ultimate compliment is to have a strong membership and player base that keeps on patronizing and enjoying our golf course! A full golf course makes the heat much easier to bear... whether it's during the really hot summer months or during a most idyllic autumn...

On any golf course I've ever been at... whether as a student, an assistant superintendent, or as 'the head cheese'... the heat that's generated is almost always internal. In other words, we all put heat on ourselves to always do a perfect job, and have a perfect golf course... with too few labor and equipment resources.

The idea list... the 'to do' list... on any golf course... never gets completed... as some items on the list continue to age for lack of priority and lack of time. What's interesting about our

attitudes toward these lists is that we view everything as very crucial, as a personal challenge to get everything completed... this week!

The real kick is that nobody else understands your priorities or your list for the golf course... nobody else on the property really knows what's going on with the golf course... if you really think about it.

Whether it's a daily, weekly, or season long thing... each and every superintendent holds the key to that great big secret out there called the golf course... and it's with some satisfaction that we're all constantly trying to explain and educate our golf professionals, owners, boards, or members as to the secrets of this great agronomic game called golf course management.

They pretend to understand or be interested... but the fact of the matter is that there is some mystery surrounding

each and every beautiful golf course. People just can't understand how it is that it all stays so beautiful... even if they are really interested! Things that we all take for granted agronomically or horticulturally are as foreign to them as nuclear physics is to me!

Others in my ownership group, however, cannot and do not share my zeal... nor can they be expected to understand what all goes into making the golf course so nice and playable.

So, what often happens is that I have my daily and weekly priorities changed with just one short visit from one of the senior owners. I always tend to put the heat on myself as concerns the condition of the playing surfaces and the aesthetics of the course itself... I want that golf course out there to look as sweet as possible every day. We have a limited number of people available daily to accomplish that task, so when priorities get

changed for me... on a seeming whim... the heat is really on to accomplish everything in a mutually satisfying and satisfactory manner!

This week, for example, we are moving out of our triple-wide, mobile-home clubhouse and preparing for the initial phases of a new... and very modest... clubhouse construction. This requires all of my people to scoot on up there after morning chores to help with the moving out, prepping the construction site, and cleaning up the entire area... considerable man-hours spent off of the golf course... but helping out the overall situation.

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and "needs to know how soon it'll be before we're finished fertilizing our roughs with their two-ton spreader... "Heck, man, we haven't even started", I reply, "but we'll get right on that and be done by mid-morning tomorrow"... which we were!

I finish off the week by working until 2:30 p.m. Saturday... installing that 'can't wait' equipment washstand drain line with a contractor friend who certainly does not have children at home anymore... and is the type who would certainly understand it if I left for the day... but somehow I can't bring myself to leave... because he's also costing us \$65 per hour... and we'll obviously finish the job sooner if I stay until the bitter end!

The heat is really on now... in October? Am I working my life away... consumed with my obligations at the course above all else... not caring what else

happens in the world? If our employers take us a bit for granted... don't we take our spouses and families a lot for granted... for three seasons out of each and every year? Do we put too much heat on them to try and understand why they can't every go on a summer vacation... like all of their friends?

The fact is though... that there's a point beyond which any of us isn't willing to travel. When it all gets to the point of getting totally taken for granted... with no career advancement in sight... it's time to make a change. The entire employer/employee relationship has to be based on mutual respect with an understanding that most of us are capable of going on to better career opportunities. And there is definitely a point in time when each of us understands this... and decides to pursue something else in life.

I've always loved to work hard... to

Am I working my life away... consumed with my obligations at the course above all else... not caring what else happens in the world? If our employers take us a bit for granted... don't we take our spouses and families a lot for granted... for three seasons out of every year?

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put in the effort to make my course look and for me to feel... successful. I'd say that all of us have tremendous pride in what we do for a living... to the point of doing much more than is required each and every day.

BACK ISSUE SEARCH

Looking for a copy of the April 1974 *Florida Green*!

Dan Jones, editor emeritus of the *Florida Green*, has passed along to me the complete collection of back issues of the *Florida Green*, well, almost complete! We are missing one issue — April 1974. If any of you packrats out there have a copy, please send it to me. I would like to have the complete collection bound in hard back covers to preserve the magazine's history.

This is part of the formula for success... whether in golf course management, turfgrass sales, or any other calling in life. Successful people thrive on the intense heat of living active, busy, rewarding lives... which often times is not easy.

Easy is working forty hours per week maximum and depending on the union to keep your lazy, poor attitude butt employed...

Easy is blaming the world for your supposedly tough problems and your unhappiness... without stopping to consider how darned good you've got it all presently... not to mention the fact that numerous opportunities for a better life surround each of us every day! !

Easy is blaming the company for not giving out ever better wages and benefits without considering the fact that most people make themselves all too replaceable by virtue of their lousy work attitude and greedy behavior. . .

And by the way, people... good businessmen don't usually keep on giving out raises and bonuses based solely on

length of service, seniority, etc.... job performance and value to the company that help lead to company profitability are the keys to a great career with any company, aren't they?

Actually for me... it's all worth it. When this golf course... this investment project is completed in about three years... Susan and I will be somewhat 'in the clover'... as my parents keep reminding us. And when I read over the GCSAA Employment Opportunities Bulletin every week... I notice that too many of them are mediocre in nature... and do not interest me anymore.

So... bring on the heat... even if it is October. The end of the season is very near... and it's been a great one for almost any golf course in 1997. Too soon we'll be feverishly wishing for some of that heat... to keep our bodies warm and our minds challenged.

The cold alternative is too soon and too lastingly upon us. Then I know... I just know for certain... that I'll quickly be so sick of winter that heat... any heat... would be most welcome.

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Both of our state industry associations, the FTGA and the FGCSA, have reached crossroads. Recent meetings and conversations confirm that major changes are in the wind for both groups. More meetings are being scheduled, including at least one between

members of both the FGCSA and FTGA boards, to determine which course to chart for the future.

Starting first on a positive note: Based on the results of the recent FGCSA day-long planning session held in November, the board is actively pursuing the hiring a full-time staff person to serve as an

executive director. I think it is an excellent idea whose time has come.

An executive director could give us professional representation at regulatory, legislative, and allied industry gatherings that we currently are conspicuously absent from, helping to build the necessary bonds and steer a course for the betterment of our industry. Expanded coverage of statewide events for publication in the Florida Green and closer coordination with FTGA would be other benefits of having in this position. Making this move will help elevate our association to the next level.

Moving to the less pleasant developments: Attendance at nearly all industry-related events throughout the state, reportedly, is down. This includes the FTGA Conference and Show, the Poa Annuia, the Crowfoot, the South Florida Expo, and some of the other chapter events. The suppliers and manufacturers who sponsor these events are disgruntled, and rightfully so. We can't continue to ask the same companies to support activities that we ourselves do not attend.

In my opinion, the primary problem is not apathy on the part of the superintendent — though it is applicable to a certain degree — but lies with the sheer number of events available to

superintendents to attend on a regular basis. No matter how much you'd like to participate in everything offered, the reality is that you wouldn't hold your job very long if you did. Few employers would accept a superintendent being away from the job 30 or more days a year in addition to family vacation time. Hard decisions must be made determining which events are most beneficial to you and your club.

So what can we do to improve attendance and ensure success of worthwhile and traditional events that, for the most part, raise funds necessary for the turfgrass research we all want and need?

First and foremost is to have each organization review its mission statement, if they have one, or otherwise determine just what their function is and who is their target audience. It is painfully obvious to me that superintendents are the primary target for a majority of these events, and since we can't attend them all, one of two things must happen: Either the number of events must be reduced, or the target audience must be expanded.

I don't think that simply changing the content, schedule, or venue, whether in a major or minor way, will improve attendance at many of these events. No matter how good a program, superintendents can't go to them all, so whatever Herculean efforts are put into making one event successful will probably come at the expense of reducing attendance at another industry event. People working within the same basic industry shouldn't be in competition with themselves and fighting over the same limited sources of support.

This doesn't mean that efforts shouldn't be made to make an event a "can't miss" affair, it just means that hard decisions must be made using common sense and logic rather than emotion, ego, and/or competition to reduce the number of offerings. Communication and coordination between the various organizations becomes essential for any hope of cooperative resolution of this serious problem.

Trying to put a positive spin on matters, what is wrong with expanding our target, where applicable, to club managers, golf pros, members, and anyone else with an interest in our business? There may be certain events where the golf course

Where do we want to go and how do we get there?

Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCS Assistant Editor

superintendent or his suppliers are the only desirable participants, but I can think of very few. We've complained for years about the golfer's indifference to our problems, but how many events do we attempt to reach out to include these people so that they have an opportunity to interact with us and learn about our needs and concerns? Why don't we use this problem of poor attendance to our advantage by including those who might be able to help us if they had any idea what we needed?

Putting on my FTGA hat for a moment, I can tell you that the FTGA will be considering co-sponsorship of the annual Conference and Show with other organizations to increase attendance and reduce the burden on the vendors who go to great expense "showing" for various organizations. Many other ideas

will be considered, all aimed at increasing attendance, excitement, and value to both attendees and exhibitors. Our task is made more difficult given the GCSAA's decision to hold its annual Conference and Show in Orlando every three years, but many talented and dedicated minds will be working on solutions.

For those of you serving on various association boards, I hope my words have struck a chord and you will consider taking appropriate actions. I also hope you will reach out to the younger superintendents in your area to encourage their participation - Sherry Krasula of the Howard Fertilizer Company pointed out to me that many of the younger guys are intimidated by those of us who have been involved for so long, and though I can't imagine

another superintendent feeling "intimidated" by me or any other association volunteer, she's probably right. If I've ever made anyone feel that way, I apologize, and hope that you realize your ideas and insights are just as important as mine or anyone else's, so speak right up and get involved!

In closing, I'd like to (once again) emphasize the importance of supporting those suppliers who fund our various activities and functions. I've heard enough recent rumblings to consider it fair warning that many of our long-time supporters aren't going to continue financial support of our industry's events if they continue losing business to competitors who make no such contribution, usually over insignificant differences in price.

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A funny thing happened on the way to my 55th birthday this past November. I kept tripping over my career path.

The only thing I could see in the beam of my golf cart headlights were mower tracks and armadillo trails in the dew. They led to 10 more years of chasing sunrises before detouring into the Social Security office. After 20 years of mowing and going at the Walt Disney Company, I thought it was time to consider

other adventures to pursue before Medicare kicks in.

Effective December 31, yours truly terminated his employment for the purpose of starting a pension. That's legalese for "Joel's taking early retirement!"

Previously, I balanced my day job and my association service like

the rest of the superintendents across the state. I struggled like everyone else to find the time to do justice to it all.

Time is such an issue that it moved both Joe Ondo and Mike Perham to write about how much time could theoretically be spent to support our many events throughout the state. The now-infamous list of 27 opportunities for conferences, meetings, seminars, tournaments, trade shows, demonstrations, research updates and other fund-raisers was an interesting exercise to illustrate a point.

Why the list?

At the FGCSA Planning Session we were discussing the subject of dwindling participation for some of our state and local events — including the 1997 FTGA Conference and Show

— and what to do about it.

This topic has come up before. Everyone keeps saying there are so many things to choose from these days. I wanted to put it down in black and white to get a real handle on it. All these functions are worthwhile! They just have the annoying requirement of taking time to plan, execute and attend.

I don't expect any superintendent actually spent 40 days away at these functions because some are very local events. The point is there are a lot of opportunities and they take up our time and resources. It may be time to reevaluate how we market these events and try to expand our audience to increase participation and financial support. Those kinds of issues were also addressed at the Planning Session.

Well, there's a message in here somewhere. It's about changes and challenges and choices. Over these past 20 years of inhaling pixie dust and having to admit to family and friends that, indeed, I did work for a mouse, I managed to have lots of fun and satisfaction in working on the *Florida Green* magazine as a sideline. People would often say, "I don't know how do you find the time to do it!"

Truthfully, it has been so rewarding I thought it might be time to follow an old dusty dream of mine of writing for a living.

The association is also discussing changes it would like to make to accomplish some of the goals that were identified at the Planning Session. Ironically, some of these current goals are similar to ones that were identified by former Long Range Planning Committees. They have been sitting idle on the back burner gathering dust for over a decade.

Whenever there's change, there are challenges to be met and choices to be made. Maybe we need to get a Dust Buster to make those dreams and plans come true! I'd be willing to give it a try. After all, now I've got the time!



Green Side Up



Joel Jackson, CGCS
Editor