

Looking to Score an Ace

After an unusual year of weather here in Florida, the advent of our active growing season could not have arrived soon enough. The year of hurricane activity was widespread, leaving no portion of the state untouched. Followed by a cool and dry winter, most of us are excited about the opportunity to strengthen our turf through our much-needed spring turf renovation programs. Those close to last year's hurricane

damage are probably planning those necessary tree-trimming chores that sometimes get overlooked. Everyone should have learned valuable lessons on managing our

golf facilities from our not-so-pleasant experiences in 2004. Hopefully, we are all taking steps to stay ahead of the game this spring, summer and beyond.

One of our goals for the year is to improve communication and coordination throughout our 12 chapters, with our national association — GCSAA — and other allied groups within our industry. This goal could not have gotten a bigger kick-start than from our recently completed, first ever Golf Industry Show held in Orlando in February. As most of you may be aware, this hugely attended event (23,000)

included participation from the American Society of Golf Course Architects, Golf Course Builders Association and Golf Course Owners Association. Soon to be included in 2007 will be the Club Managers Association.

This was a bold attempt by the GCSAA to recognize the importance of including these most influential pieces of our industry at our own conference and show. We have always felt that the more golf's importance in Florida is understood, the better the chance of improving our varied public perception.

By involving more allied groups in our business, we hope to score an ace this year and in the future through awareness of the issues, communication of facts and information and engagement on finding solutions so we become a bigger, stronger group. Everyone doing a little bit is better than waiting for a select few to carry the torch.

A few of our own members received wonderful recognition at the recently completed Golf Industry Show. Bob Randquist, CGCS, from the Boca Rio Golf Club was elected to the GCSAA Board of Directors. Not only is Bob well known around the country, but has quickly gained respect here in Florida since his arrival from Oklahoma. We are very excited to have Bob serve on the national board and are confident he will promote the importance of golf in our state through his future contacts and travels.

Also recognized was Stuart Leventhal, CGCS, from Interlachen Country Club for receiving the Superintendent of the Year Award from Golfweek/Superintendent News. Only one superintendent from America can win this prestigious award, and we are very

proud to have him here in our own state. Don't look now, Stuart, but we may need to harness some of your talent at the state association level.

With more than 1,300 golf courses around the state, you would think that a few of us would be able to golf a bit even with our busy maintenance schedules. Well, golf he did! Seth Strickland from Miami Shores Country Club recently walked away with the coveted National Superintendents Tournament trophy at two fine Orlando venues. As far as we can tell, Seth is only the third Florida superintendent to ever come away with such an honor in the 50 or so years in this championship history. Seth wasn't the only one who played well. The No. 1 Florida Team of Bob Harper, Mark Henderson and Joe Ondo joined Seth to capture the much-sought-after team trophy as well. Congratulations to them and all that participated for representing our state so well!

On a different note, the need for turf research continues to loom as one of our biggest challenges for the future. A couple of very important projects are ongoing while many others are in need for the near future. Our most popular product used for controlling Nematodes is being phased out in 2007, and we are very concerned for future viable alternative products. Dr. William Crow from the University of Florida is currently engaged in a study to look for another way to control this widespread pest. There seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel as 2007 quickly approaches.

Also involved in a current research project is Dr. Lawrence Datnoff from the University of Florida. He is studying the relatively new ultradwarf putting green turf varieties. His particular area of concern is the disease pressure we are seeing with these relatively new grasses. So much is yet to be learned about these exciting turf strains, and we are hopeful we receive some valuable information on managing them in the near future.

One of our most important products, methyl bromide, is in imminent danger of being removed from the market. This soil sterilant is used on nearly every course in the state as well as the entire agricultural industry in an effort to achieve clean soil prior to the planting of hybrid turf and crops. Our suppliers are working hard at protecting our use of this product with federal regulators, using scientific data to prove its safety, importance and effectiveness. There are no viable alternatives for methyl bromide at this time and all that is being done to retain it is much appreciated.

There are many more pending research projects that need to be tackled. Alternative water use sources and the development of turf types that may need less irrigation, fertilizer and chemicals are high on the list for short-term development. If you can share insights on these or have any other ideas for future research projects, we would love to hear from you.

As I mentioned earlier, golf is a huge business in Florida. We could use just a little help from everyone on these and other issues. We are confident, that with our newly included segments of the industry, the sky is the limit for future turfgrass advancements.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Joe Pantaleo
FGCSA President