

2005 USGA Regional Conference
More than 100 Attend USGA Conference

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

Attendance at the 2005 USGA Regional Conference in Palm Beach Gardens, like many other events, was affected by Hurricane Wilma, but nonetheless it was successful and educational for 100-plus at the session

Longtime director of Southeast Regional Affairs, Roger Harvie, is retiring and Kathy Gordon has taken his place at the Marietta, Ga. office. Harvie will be moving to Florida, possibly to the Treasure Coast.

MORNING SESSION

Mr. Positivity, Tim Hiers, CGCS, discussed how turn your main-



From left: Todd Lowe, USGA Agronomist and Superintendents John Cunningham and Tim Hiers go over Power Point procedures at the USGA Regional Conference held in Palm Beach Gardens. Photo by Joel Jackson.

tenance facility into an asset for crew morale and course productivity. You don't have to have a big budget to have a neat, clean and organized shop. A little pride and professionalism in the maintenance facility shows the crew that you and the club care about them. It pays dividends.

Setting written maintenance standards so a superintendent knows what the members want and expect in terms of course conditioning is easier than you think, according to Todd

Lowe, USGA agronomist who listed ways for members to achieve consensus on priorities. With divergent opinions among committee members a superintendent must try to satisfy a wide range of expectations.

Pete Dye has said the three most important aspects of golf course design are drainage, drainage, and drainage. Pat O'Brien USGA agronomist from the Southeast Region recommended hiring professional drainage experts to solve your problems. New technology and methods can capture and move water more efficiently, and a professional will get results.

Bruce Adams from the South Florida Water Management District discussed cooperative funding initiatives for water conservation. To no one's surprise, public consumption is the number-one enemy in the much-ballyhooed water crisis. Adams said much water could be saved simply by retrofitting high-rise condos to meet current codes. He also said that, in a



Afternoon Session speakers at the USGA Regional Conference included Pat O'Brien, USGA Agronomist, Lee Bloomcamp, Syngenta and John Mascaro, Turf Tec International. Photo by Joel Jackson.

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recent survey of golf-course use, golf was using two percent of the water in SWFWMD district.

Hopefully, Black Diamond Ranch and Superintendent John Cunningham, CGCS will be the catalyst to shed light on the subject of shade on greens. The ancient battle between trees and turf took a positive step when the owner and members of Black Diamond Ranch enacted a sun-light-enhancement program that essentially mandates that all trees causing turf decline on the course shall be removed. They have taken a stand that the turf is the most important aspect on a golf course. Hallelujah!

AFTERNOON SESSION

After lunch, Jim Leiseberg, regional agronomist for WCI Communities, said environmentally responsible development can be a definite asset to the local community. His company's commitment extends from the design and operation of the golf courses to the entire community plan.

John Foy, director of the USGA Florida Region Green Section discussed winter annual weed control. He said new products have made chemical transition more of a reality for those who don't want Mother Nature to pull any surprises.

Nozzle-type selection and droplet patterns are just as important as calibrating your spray equipment, according to Dr. Phil Harmon, plant pathologist with UF/IFAS.

Lee Bloomcamp from Syngenta discussed rumor versus reality in pesticide resistance. Rotating chemicals is good policy, but plants and pests don't mutate at the drop of a hat. It takes the right combination of events for resistance to develop.

John Mascaro, president of TurfTec International, has revived the famous Mascaro Photo Quiz of his late father, Tom. The Photo Quiz feature, and old and new turf puzzles, appear regularly in Golf Course Management magazine. My favorite was the mysterious circular thin spots the size of hoola hoops on sports turf. The answer? Cheerleader wear.

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Membership Issues Dominate 2005 Delegates Meeting

Membership issues dominated the discussions at GCSAA's 13th Chapter Delegates Meeting, Oct. 1-2 in Kansas City.

Chaired by Vice President Sean A. Hoolehan, CGCS, the meeting provided delegates updates on GCSAA programs and policies, and solicited input on key issues relevant to the profession, industry and the game. Attendees also heard presentations from candidates for national offices that will be filled by elections at the 2006 annual meeting in Atlanta, Feb. 9.

MARKETING CLASS A AND CERTIFIED

Director Robert M. Randquist, CGCS, presented the next step in the association's implementation of the Professional Development Initiative —

executing a marketing plan for the various membership classes. The association will seek to position GCSAA members differently from nonmembers, Class A members apart from Superintendent members, and Certified members in a manner distinct from non-certified members. The goal is to communicate value in the marketplace, resulting in a stronger position (financially, organizationally, and professionally) for GCSAA members.

DUES PRICING STRUCTURE

In a follow-up from the 2004 delegates meeting, Secretary/Treasurer Ricky D. Heine, CGCS, led discussion on a programmed dues-pricing structure. Rather than levying 15-20 percent increases periodically (approximately every five years), the proposed concept is to implement a regular increase that is tied to the consumer price index. Past feedback has supported such a model because it is easier to budget and could

stem membership drops resulting from periodic large increases. This concept has received support from various GCSAA committees. The delegates approved continued discussion on this topic.

GROWTH AND RETENTION

Staff also unveiled a membership-growth and -retention program to combat declining membership from 22,000-plus in 2002 to about 20,500.

Membership numbers are important for many reasons. Dues revenue determines the extent of member programs and services. A growing membership gives GCSAA a stronger position to strengthen the association's ability to advocate on behalf of its members. Key to the strategy is focusing on value when communicating with employers and nonmembers.

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announced a strategy to strengthen it by becoming more inclusive. Rafael Barajas, CGCS and a member of GCSAA's Diversity Task Group, said organizations that do not embrace a diversity of people and ideas will not grow and will lose stature. GCSAA's efforts to become more inclusive will be long term, Barajas said, and the first step is to increase awareness of the importance of the issue and to evaluate the organization's current situation. He said that such a strategy also will support growth of the game by offering access to those who may have been ignored in the past.

FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

Discussion of trends affecting the game, facilities and the profession over the next 15 years took place in small groups. Feedback from the delegates and six GCSAA committees and task groups will help the board challenge its vision for the future.

UPDATES

Additional topics included the chapter-affiliation agreement, the association's environmental programming efforts and a data-collection effort for member courses to commence in 2006.

We can only prevail on the environmental issues if we have accurate data to compare and refine the computer models used by EPA and others to regulate our industry. Be prepared to participate in this survey if called upon. It is important.

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE SURVEY

Why initiate a survey?

The golf industry needs specific baseline information about the environmental state of golf courses. We need to understand current environmental management practices on golf courses to help document progress made by the industry and to help determine the direction of our

efforts in the future. The data will also help us respond to questions about environmental issues. Existing "environmental" data is very limited, incomplete, and not uniform or centralized. Often information in the news media is inaccurate or misleading.

What kind of information will we be requesting?

The task groups identified categories such as water use, water quality, habitat and wildlife, energy consumption and inputs of nutrients and pesticides be included in the survey.

Essential data are profiles of the physical features of each golf course surveyed, including information about the acreage and grass species on greens, tees, fairways, rough and natural areas. Additional key information includes area devoted to the clubhouse, parking lots, maintenance facility and recreational amenities besides the golf course.

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The content was based on input from the Environmental Programs Committee and associated task groups with input from staff.

How will the survey be performed?

The GCSAA will use a professional research firm to refine the questions and format, conduct the survey, and summarize the results.

We are considering an online survey, paper survey and other methods to ensure a high return rate.

The survey will be conducted in five short annual installments. Over a five-year period we will collect the entire data set needed.

Once the five-year survey cycle and analysis has been completed, GCSAA will begin the process for a second five-year survey cycle to document environmental change and determine progress on golf courses.

The data collected will be presented only as aggregate data, summarized by state, region or other geo-

graphic area. Responses from individual golf courses will not be published or released.

How will this information be used?

It will be used to document environmental progress and determine the future direction of GCSAA environmental efforts.

Key issues will be identified

for potential research projects.

The data will provide a basis for comments on proposed regulatory issues that may impact the golf industry.

GCSAA will have the ability to respond to the government's inquiries, answer the public's questions about environmental issues, and promote the great efforts our superintendents are making on their golf courses.



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