

55th Annual Show Completes FTGA's Estero Run

'Greatest Show on Turf' Moves to PGA National in Palm Beach Gardens Sept. 16-19, 2008

By Joel Jackson, CGCS (Ret.)

There at the podium during the 2007 Awards Luncheon stood Ralph White, senior statesman of the FTGA. I met White when he worked for Southern Turf Nurseries when I was just a high school kid working a summer job on the Apollo Beach Golf Course near Tampa. Now, 47 years later, we have been colleagues in this great industry. White said he had missed only two of the 55 conferences over the years. He commented on past leaders and future generations of the turf industry in his impromptu remarks. He also lauded the FTGA for its trend of inclusion to make sure all sectors of the turfgrass industry are being represented on the board of directors. He praised the FTGA on its vision and direction.

This was the FTGA's last meeting at the Hyatt Coconut Point in Estero for awhile. Next year, the conference



New 2007-08 FTGA Officers open Trade Show. From left: Secretary/Treasurer Greg Pheneger, Vice President Todd Himmelberger, President Darren Davis, Executive Director Casey Wohl Pace and Immediate Past President Jay McCord. Photo courtesy of The Marketplace.

moves to the PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens. The dates are Sept. 16-19. The FTGA is trying to serve its members by making the education and networking accessible to as many members as possible.

This year the conference started off with some fun events — the fishing and golf tournaments. This year the golf tournament had special meaning for FGCSA members as the winner of the individual low gross event automatically gains a spot on the FGCSA's golf team to compete in the GCSAA National Golf Championship in Orlando in January. Seth Strickland from the South Florida GCSA and Miami Shores CC took home the trophy.

For those not playing golf, workshops and pesticide license classes filled the day Wednesday leading up to the annual Toro Corn Boil steak dinner that evening prepared by Wiley McCall and company from Environmental Turf. The rains held off and everyone ate his fill.

Thursday morning was full of concurrent education sessions for every sector of the turf industry. At the Awards Luncheon, former NFL All-Pro quarterback Jim Hart, now a Southwest Florida resident, entertained the crowd with a recap of his career and life experience from a "right time – right



FTGA President Jay McCord (left) presents Roy Bates with the 2007 Wreath of Grass Award for Lifetime Service to the FTGA during the Awards Luncheon at the 2007 FTGA Conference and Show in Estero, FL. Photo courtesy of The Marketplace.



After his keynote address at the 2007 FTGA Awards Luncheon, All-Pro Quarterback Jim Hart spent an hour at the Trade Show signing autographs and chatting with NFL fans. Photo courtesy of Leading Edge Communications.

place” perspective. Then the new FTGA officers and directors were installed, scholarships were awarded and Roy Bates received the Wreath of Grass Award after a friendly roasting from his longtime pal, Jerry Redden.

For me and the FGCSA, our new association manager, Jennifer Innes, made her public debut at our booth at the trade show and met lots of our members and other key industry folks. We made several promising advertising contacts for the Florida Green and got a chance to touch base with Hannes Combest from GCSAA as the national group fulfills its mission to be a solid resource for chapters and members to succeed. I met more turf industry professionals from other sectors such as parks and recreation and sports turf, which bodes well for the FTGA and for our united turf interests and issues in the state.



Seth Strickland won the 2007 FTGA Golf Tournament at Bonita Bay West and a place on the FGCSA Golf Team for the GCSAA National Championships in Orlando in 2008. Photo by Joel Jackson.



From left: During the Trade Show in Estero, Dale Mitchell and Richard Coyler from Golf Agronomic Supply and Handling presented President Darren Davis with a \$3,000 donation for the FTGA Research Foundation. Photo by Joel Jackson.