

Meet the President

By Joel Jackson

Thirty-four years after getting into golf course maintenance, Gary Myers, CGCS is the Manager of Golf Course Maintenance Operations of Walt Disney World Company and the President of the Florida GCSA. Neither role is new to Myers as he also served as Regional Director of Golf Course Maintenance Operations for the Tournament Players Clubs and is a past president of the Southern Nevada GCSA.

Originally from Anderson, Ind., Myers attended Purdue University majoring in mechanical engineering, but ended up getting his Turf Management certificate from the University of Massachusetts. He began his golf maintenance career in 1976 on the crew at Arthur Pack Regional Park & Golf Course in Tucson, Ariz. He loved the work and the superintendent and assistant at the course both had graduated from UMass and they talked Myers into getting his golf management education there.

From 1978 to 1996 Gary progressed from an assistant superintendent position at Tucson National GC, to a series of

superintendent positions at CC of Green Valley, AZ (79-82); Desert Inn Hotel & CC, Las Vegas (82-89); TPC Summerlin, Las Vegas (89-94) and the Tournament Players Club in Scottsdale, AZ (94-96) before coming to Disney World.

Disney Golf Operations covers 81 holes: The Magnolia, Palm, Lake Buena Vista and Osprey Ridge 18-hole courses and the nine-hole Oak Trail walking course adjacent to the Magnolia.

Since December 1971 – barely two months after the opening of Walt Disney World Resort – the PGA Tour has been making an annual visit to the popular vacation destination. But for the Tour and some of the world's greatest golfers, the visit has had a serious side: a late-season tournament that has sometimes decided money titles, scoring championships and the makeup of the following year's all-exempt Tour.

It started out as a typical individual event, but after a few years it changed to a two-man team event, and eventually reverted to an important season-ending event for those Tour exemptions. Currently known as the Children's Miracle



Gary Myers, CGCS, President

Network Classic, the tournament has a list of champions that includes Jack Nicklaus (three times) and Tiger Woods (twice).

Myers mentions a couple of mentors who were instrumental in helping him develop his career.

“Steve Talkington, a former Scott’s salesman, encouraged me to apply for the Desert Inn job,” he said. “I thought I might be too young and lack the necessary experience to move up to such a higher-profile facility. Without his advice and help I’m not sure where I would be today.

“George Jaramillo, former owner of Las



Third hole, Disney's Palm Course, one of the courses involved in PGA tournament play since 1971. Photo courtesy of Walt Disney World.

Vegas Fertilizer, was another individual for whom I have so much respect. He gave me advice on how to handle myself personally and professionally, which I have never forgotten.”

Myers advises prospective or young superintendents to “be professional in the way you approach your job and that also includes the way you dress. In this often challenging profession, Change is another opportunity to succeed! Keep your emotion with regard to work steady. Try not to get too high when conditions are good and don’t get too low when conditions aren’t so great.”

His personal goal is “to be a good father, husband and friend. Also to be a good son, but like many of us we don’t see that as a priority until we get older.

“Other than family moments, the



Allied association representatives met in Orlando in July. Panelists, from left: John Reger, Jr, PGA of America; Martha Mazzitelli, Hospitality Financial & Technology Professionals; Art Kinkle, Florida CMAA president; Susan Wegrzyn, National Club Association, Pete Snyder, executive director FTGA and Gary Myers, CGCS, president FGCSA. Photo courtesy of CMAA.

perhaps the most memorable for me was when my Pop Warner football team was playing a team from Jacksonville for the North Florida Championship. The game was tied in regulation 0-0. We scored in what is called a Kansas City Tie Breaker and, when we kept them from scoring, we won the game. It was the most exhilarating moment of my life other than close family moments. We went on to lose to Miami the following week.

“The second most memorable moment came the following year when we beat that same Miami team to advance to the Pop Warner Super Bowl. I enjoy spending time with my family more than anything, and I have been coaching Pop Warner Football for 12 years.”

Myers served on the boards and in all offices of the Southern

Nevada GCSA, the Central Florida GCSA and the FGCSA. He has served on local advisory boards and GCSAA committees to volunteer his time to the associations representing our profession. His most recent service came as he represented the FGCSA at the CMAA Golf Summit in Orlando in July. He summarizes the summit topics in his President’s Message in this issue.

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58th FTGA Annual Conference & Show

By Joel Jackson

Attendance numbers were up and all the trade-show booth space was sold out for the 58th edition of the FTGA Conference & Show Sept. 15-17 at the Caribe Royale Hotel in Orlando. By all accounts it was a successful event at a venue everyone had positive comments about.

The hotel rooms were all suites, the conference center layout was superb with the registration area immediately adjacent to the three meeting-room wings, the breakfast and lunch rooms and the trade-show ballroom. You never had to walk far to take care of business. The parking lot between the conference center and the hotel provided ample room for equipment displays and educational emergency spill response demonstrations.

Wednesday morning began bright and



FTGA Past President Jan Beljan presented Matt Taylor, CGCS with the 2010 Wreath of Grass award at the FTGA Conference in Orlando. Photo by Joel Jackson.

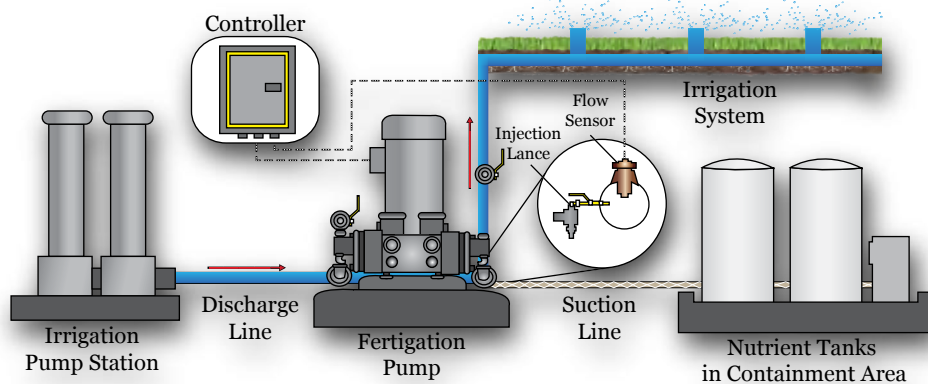
early with a free continental breakfast and educational sessions. The afternoon offered up the annual golf tournament with individual stroke and team scramble formats.

Mark Henderson won the individual event. He had already qualified for the FGCSA Golf Team, so the fourth member of the team will be the person with the low average score from the other qualifying events.

On Thursday morning, the traditional prayer breakfast was merged with the annual business meeting to free up the afternoon for a trade-show-only format, which definitely boosted the number of people browsing, dealing and networking on the show floor. Following the trade show, the Corn Boil and Live Auction were held on the Boca Patio at the hotel pool area.

On Friday morning, those needing core Pesticide CEUs to maintain their

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restricted pesticide licenses attended special classroom and outdoor hands-on demonstration training. There was also a class dedicated solely to academic and professional education of the turf students in attendance.

Highlights of the Conference included the presentation of the FTGA's prestigious Wreath of Grass Award in recognition of an individual's personal and professional dedication to Florida's Turf Industry. This year Matt Taylor CGCS, director of golf maintenance operations at the Royal Poinciana Club in Naples was the recipient. Golf Course Architect Jan Beljan presented the award and did a masterful job of keeping the audience guessing the winner's identity as long as possible until the record of service began to point undeniably to Matt's service to his peers and profession. The best part was when Matt's family was ushered into the rear of ballroom and got to share in the honor and totally surprise Matt.

Then it was back to business as the new officers and board members were sworn and significant changes to the bylaws were passed to create new membership categories to help get more people involved in the association to strengthen the industry. The new officers: President Mac Carroway, SMR Sod Farms; Vice President Armando Campos, Bayer Environmental Science; and Mac Briley, City of Ocoee Parks & Recreation Department.

Next former NFL player, and leading punter in his day, Herman "Thunderfoot" Weaver, gave an inspirational presentation about his personal journey of faith and mastering life's challenges. With humor and humility he recounted his trials and tribulations in his search for the life he was meant to lead. It was a message about never giving up or being afraid to ask for help.



Star NFL punter Herman "Thunderfoot" Weaver gave a humorous and inspirational message at the combined FTGA Annual Meeting and Prayer Breakfast. Photo by Joel Jackson.



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Aerify using smaller diameter tines in the fall to speed up turf recovery. Photo by Joel Jackson.

GREEN SECTION UPDATE

Prepping for Winter

By John H. Foy

It has been a long and hot summer, and for courses throughout the eastern two-thirds of the country, the extreme high temperatures that have been experienced have taken a toll on cool-season turfgrasses.

Growing up and going to school in Georgia, Labor Day weekend was always an important and anticipated time. Along with marking the beginning of Southeastern Conference football, cooler nighttime temperatures inevitably began to occur and bentgrass putting greens began to recover from summer stress. After 25 years in South Florida, the arrival of Labor Day is still anticipated because of the return of college football, but it has a different

meaning with respect to golf course management.

For Florida golf courses, the arrival of Labor Day means that it is time to wrap up summertime cultural management programs and projects, and prepping for the upcoming winter season becomes the priority.

At courses in Central to South Florida, a final core aeration of putting greens is typically conducted in early to mid-September, and while sustained bermudagrass growth is occurring, the rate of recovery is slowing down. Thus, care needs to be exercised not to cause excessive mechanical damage, and the use of smaller-diameter tines (3/8 to 1/2-inch) is advised.

It is important to continue to verticut bermudagrass putting greens during

the late summer and early fall to control grain and aid in controlling surface organic matter accumulation. However, because intense environmental stress conditions are typically prevailing, it is important not to exert significant additional mechanical stress on the turf and cause a further setback in its health and coverage.

At all of the courses recently visited, the verticutting units have been adjusted so that they are only operating at a depth of 1/10- to 1/8-inch below the effective height of cut. In late September to October, verticutting will be completely discontinued and increased use of mower-mounted brush or groomer attachments will occur.

For at least another six to eight weeks, hot and humid summertime weather

conditions will continue to occur in Florida, favorable for sustained warm season turfgrass growth. Regardless of whether winter overseeding of bermudagrass putting greens will be performed, it is extremely important that fertilization and other management practices continue to be geared to promote balanced growth, carbohydrate production, and storage.

If the health of the bermudagrass has been compromised going into the winter, naturally there is increased potential for problems in the spring when the transition out of the overseeding cover begins to occur. Thus, along with making sure that sufficient levels of available nutrients – especially potassium – is maintained, sufficient leaf surface area must be present to support balanced, healthy growth.

Maintaining very low heights of cut is even more of a concern at this point because of reduced sunlight conditions and a progressively declining day

length. Unfortunately, however, in another few weeks, seasonal golfers will begin returning to Florida, and the pressure for fast to very fast putting speeds will start ramping up. However, if compromises are made now, consequences can be experienced later on during the primary play season.

As an additional comment with respect to sunlight, bermudagrass putting greens have no shade tolerance. A minimum of eight hours of direct sunlight is needed with close-cut bermudagrass putting greens. This past winter the negative impact of shade problems was further increased by the adverse and abnormal weather pattern that occurred. Hopefully, needed vegetation thinning and removal work has already been completed, but if this is not the case, it is certainly not too late to get out the chainsaws, and the turf will still benefit from increased sunlight and air circulation.

Finally, pre-emergent herbicide treat-

ments for winter annual weed control, and especially *Poa annua*, is a necessary and important consideration for Florida golf courses at this time, and already under way at many courses in North Florida. This past winter there was a bumper crop of *Poa annua* on many golf courses, and besides being a very prolific seed producer, the seed can remain viable in the soil for up to six years.

A free recording of a previous webcast by Dr. Bert McCarty at Clemson University provides an excellent review of *Poa annua* management strategies. This webcast, as well as a Bermudagrass Disease Update, can easily be accessed and reviewed for free by going to <https://gsportal.usga.org/webcast/default.aspx>.

If you would like more information about a TAS (Turf Advisory Service) visit, please do not hesitate to contact our office at 772-546-2620, or by emailing Todd Lowe, tlowe@usga.org or John Foy, jfoy@usga.org. ■

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