

FIELD OBSERVATIONS



By *Ralph K Dain Jr.,
GCSAA Regional Representative Florida*

I hope that a good number of you know who I am by now. Whether you want to admit it or not is another question!

The editor of the *Florida Green* has graciously provided me with some space to communicate information and observations from my travels around the Sunshine State.

It is my intention to keep you apprised of what is going on both at the local level and nationally with the GCSAA. I am not sure exactly how much space I will be afforded. However, I do know Joel Jackson cannot queue up music like

the awards shows or Jeff Strother, past president Suncoast GCSA, did at their recent annual meeting when I went a little long. *Editor's note: We'll give you all the space you need. And yes, Ralph, no music, but I do get the final cut.)*

In my most recent chapter visits I have spoken about the FGCSA's efforts to initiate a certification program for the Florida Golf BMP manual. Matt Taylor, CGCS, envisioned this program nearly two years ago and we are hoping to unveil the initial testing at the Central Florida GCSA's Crowfoot Open Aug. 5. Some of the core topics were presented as part of the Everglades Spring Symposium to get the ball rolling.

The Florida Golf BMP manual has garnered numerous accolades at the national level and has thus far been instrumental in keeping golf out of the ordinances calling for additional fertilizer application restrictions in a number of locations. These ordinances do refer to the adherence to the Golf BMPs during local application blackout periods. Therefore it is critical that all of you be aware of these practices and diligent in documenting all the positive practices you employ at your facility.

If you need or want additional copies of the Florida BMP manual, please let me know and I will get them to you. I have seen the mother lode and IFAS has an entire pallet full of manuals available to distribute.

It is a good idea to share a copy of the manual with your owner, general manager, or committee members to help communicate your environmental stewardship efforts and the required practices if your city or county has a restrictive fertilizer ordinance.

I look forward to communicating to you one-on-one with my "Field Observations" for what I hope is a long, healthy time!! Until next time, I remain...

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LIGHTS AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL



**GREEN SIDE UP
BY JOEL JACKSON**

If you are watching your investment portfolio, you are probably still in a state of uncertainty and anxiety over the nation's economic outlook. Certainly the golf industry isn't out of the woods yet, but at least some clearings are visible and there's room to stretch instead of always walking in the shadows.

After a couple of years of poorly attended events,

meetings and outings, reports of increased attendance at many chapter events are filtering through the grapevine. I know the Envirotron Classic was a 36-hole sell out, and attendance numbers from other early spring events was up over the past year or two. So there are some positive signs that people are tired of hiding in the cave and are craving continuing education and camaraderie.

There are encouraging signs from introductory programs like Get Golf Ready and news that individual facilities are getting more creative about welcoming golfers of all ages and abilities. Creative forward-tee installations by golf course architects are helping new golfers be more successful and enjoy the game while they develop their skills.

More clubs are setting aside tee times and days of the week where junior and beginner programs can get established. In one of the more extreme, but certainly unique, inventions for golfers

with limited physical abilities but still with the desire to be on the course with friends is a system called Ezee Golf. It consists of one special club that "fires" the golf ball 50 to 225 yards with power cartridges similar to a nail gun, and a wedge and a putter for the up-close chips and putts.

Certainly this isn't for USGA-sanctioned play and GHIN handicaps, but the majority of golfers are all about fun and friendship outdoors and not about placing a club championship trophy on the mantle. The game is finally making room for the "game" of golf and not just the competition to beat par or your opponent.

Recently, I played in two scramble tournaments at the International Network of Golf (ING) spring conference at the Innisbrook Resort in Palm Harbor. They have a full handicap pairs event to win a spot in the World Pairs Championship held in Scotland. But for the rest of us hacks there are scramble events.

Rather than the same old cruel and usual punishment of making me tee off from the blue tees where my drives become useless for the team, the golf committee said, "Let's have fun!" Seniors were invited to play from their tee of choice where they felt most comfortable.

I was not embarrassed to drive up to the forward tees and give it a whack. In fact, by doing so I had a real chance to contribute to the team and put a ball in the landing area where the A and B players drive. It let me enjoy the round a whole lot more than just saying, "Well, I don't need to hit on this hole."

We need to get more people engaged in the game for the industry's survival. It's refreshing to see golf courses, businesses and associations exploring new ways to get that done. ■



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