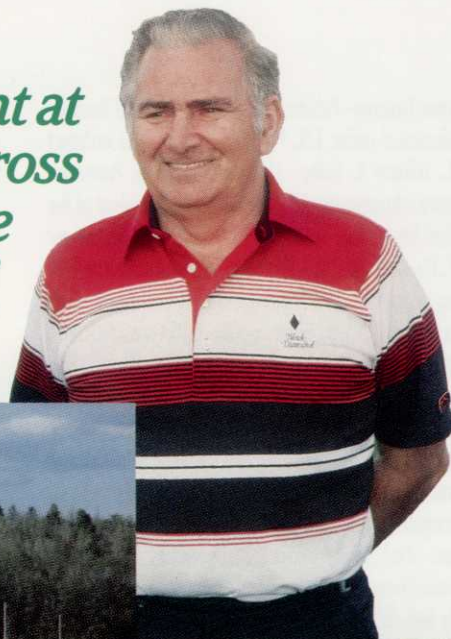


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— Karl Jacob, Superintendent Black Diamond Ranch



Cobra creeping bentgrass does it all for Karl Jacob on the Tom Fazio-designed course at Lecanto, Florida.

Here's what Karl says about Cobra:

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“With Cobra my greens are playable in half the time and they look better than ever before.”

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USGA \$4.1 million grant extends research programs through 1997

The USGA has extended the turfgrass research program begun in 1982 with a \$4.1 million appropriation for projects to be conducted through 1997.

The money will fund research projects, still to be selected, in plant improvement and resource management. The former appropriation includes turfgrass breeding and biotechnology; the latter includes cultural practices, biotechnology and pest management.

A request for "pre-proposals" will be sent to university researchers next month and final decisions on projects to be funded will be made by the Turfgrass Research Committee in March.

In the final round of awards for the previous USGA program, University of Florida researchers at the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center re-

ceived funding for two projects at the FGCSA's Otto Schmeisser Memorial Research Green on the FLREC campus.

Among the objectives of the original 10-year research program was the significant reduction of water use and maintenance costs by breeding new grasses and developing improved cultural maintenance practices.

Two improved turfgrass varieties, NuMex Sahara bermudagrass and NE 84-609 buffalograss are now available for use on golf courses and other turf areas as a result of USGA funding.

Much of the background work has been accomplished with the breeding programs sponsored by the USGA and the organization expects more varieties to be released this decade.

During the next five-year phase of the program, emphasis will be placed on developing grasses and cultural maintenance practices that conserve natural re-

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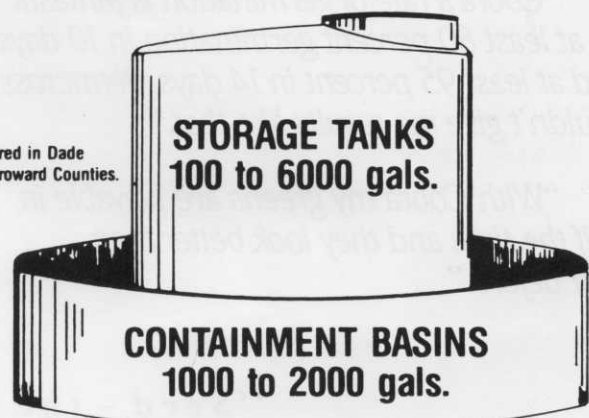
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sources. New grasses will be sought that require less water, pesticides and fertilizer, and that exhibit other desirable characteristics, including:

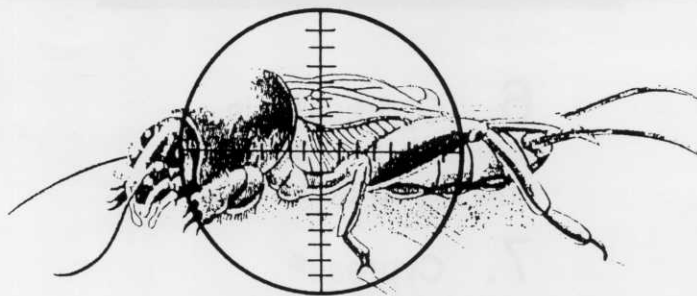
- ability to survive temperature extremes
- tolerance of non-potable water
- tolerance of alkaline, acid or saline soils
- reduced need for mowing and fertilization
- resistance to diseases, insects, nematodes and weed competition
- tolerance of smog and other pollutants
- shade tolerance

By extending the funding of the turfgrass research program for a five-year period, the USGA hopes to ensure continued high standards for the maintenance of golf courses while addressing environmental concerns about the protection and conservation of natural resources.

Tennessee golf course gets Audobon honor

The Honors Course in Ooltewah, Tenn., site of the U.S. Amateur Championship last month, has become the first golf course recognized for its conservation and preservation efforts under the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. The course was awarded an original oil painting by Adriano Manocchio depicting a view of the ninth hole, capturing its natural habitat, nest boxes, and wildlife.

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*No. 8, South Course,
BallenIsles Country Club
at JDM, Palm Beach Gardens.*

Photos by Brian Everhart

Tom Benefield –



*No. 7, South Course, BallenIsles Country Club
at JDM, Palm Beach Gardens.*

He works on cutting edge of profession

BY KIT BRADSHAW

These are crucial times for Florida golf course superintendents. The politics of water conservation and environmental protection make golf courses an easy target for governmental shenanigans, even if the bureaucrats are misinformed, which can be expected.

Tom Benefield Jr., newly-installed president of the FGCSA, is both knowledgeable and articulate about the politically-sensitive issues facing golf course ownership and superintendents. He is now in the right place at the right time to lead his fellow superintendents toward correcting misconceptions and misinformation about golf courses and their benefits to the state.

He knows the objections that have been raised against golf courses and more importantly, he knows the answers to those objections and can communicate them.

Intelligent, experienced, well-organized, focused, tough and tenacious: these are all qualities that make up the man who now directs his attention toward proving the positive worth and value of golf courses in the Florida environ-

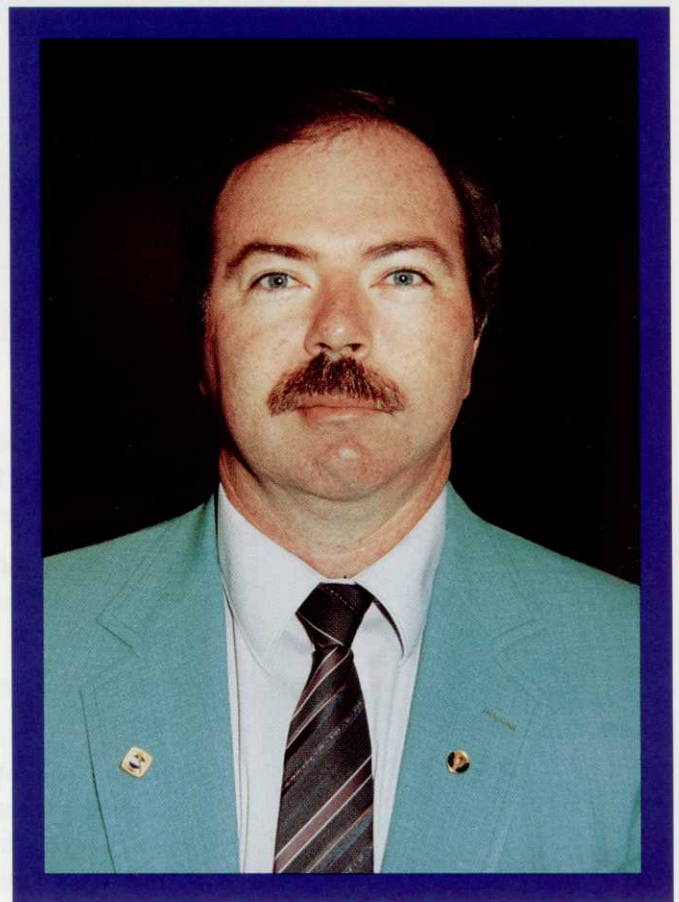


Photo by Philip Pettus

**Tom Benefield, CGCS
president of the FGCSA**

mental scheme.

Tom's background gives clues to his ability to transform apparent weaknesses into strength.

When Tom Benefield was in the fourth grade he stut-

No. 8, East Course, BallenIsles Country Club at JDM, Palm Beach Gardens.



tered constantly. But through the efforts of his teacher, who helped him overcome his stuttering through music, he went on to become a debater and a parliamentarian in high school.

At a previous job, Benefield was the 10th superintendent in six years at Beacon Woods near Spring Hill, Fla. “Two weeks after I came to Beacon Woods,” he said, “my greens chairman was upset with me and some of the things I was doing. He told me, ‘You weren’t my choice. I didn’t vote for you.’”

“When I left four years later, he came back to me and said, ‘Even though you weren’t my choice, I think you’ve done a hell of a job here.’”

“It was good to have someone who was totally against you change his perspective on how he views your job and win him over.”

Benefield doesn’t quit easily. And he realizes that one of his goals as the FGCSA’s new president — getting a state professional licensing program for golf course superintendents — is going to be controversial.

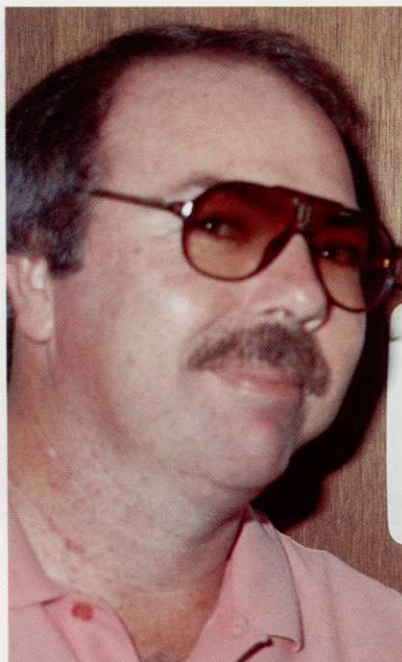
“It will anger some people,” he said matter-of-factly. “But it will make others happy. About 75 percent of the superintendents will be able to qualify for a license. About 20 to 25 percent won’t qualify and they’ll be upset.”

“It will also affect people moving into Florida from other states. You will have to show that you have knowledge of Florida conditions to work here. And when the licensing program is in effect, every golf course would be required to have a licensed superintendent on the staff.”

Benefield has some solid reasons behind his push for licensing. “It’s strange to me that you have to have a license to cut hair, but not to deal with water recharge areas, the aquifer, pesticides and so on. I think it’s something that’s been needed for a long time.”

Benefield said the logical way for licensing criteria to be created would be for the FGCSA to work with the DER,

Tom Benefield, CGCS



Age: 37

Education: Graduated from Lake City Community College with a degree in Golf Course Operations. Certified Golf Course Superintendent, GCSAA.

Current Position: Golf course superintendent at BallenIsles Country Club at JDM, Palm Beach Gardens.

Professional: President of FGCSA, previously vice president.

Previous employment: Assistant superintendent at River Oaks CC, Houston; Superintendent at Willow Creek CC, Beaumont, Texas; superintendent Sun Air CC, Dundee, Fla.; superintendent, Beacon Woods, near Spring Hill, Fla.

Family: Married to Deborah Eileen. They have a son, Joshua, 9.



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water management districts and the Florida Freshwater Fish and Game Commission.

"The licensing program could encompass a grandfather clause. There are a lot of people who don't have the education, but who are among the best superintendents in the state. So they could be grandfathered in," he said.

Along with licensing would be an institute for continuing education through the FGCSA, where superintendents would attend educational programs one day every three months to stay abreast of the regulations.

"We have the structure through the education committee," Benefield said. "The biggest problem is to get the superintendents to agree it needs to be done." Benefield realizes this won't be easily achieved, but he said he enjoys challenges.

To some extent, he's been preparing for his presidency of the FGCSA since his days as a superintendent in Texas.

Jim Holub, superintendent at River Oaks CC in Houston, gave Benefield good grounding in the job skills necessary to be a good golf superintendent.

"I think the first person you work for out of school influences how you proceed through the rest of your career," Benefield said. "If you get the knowledge up front, you will do very well down the road. On the other hand, if you don't work for someone who is up on what needs to be done and has good practices and management ability, you will definitely have trouble down the road. Jim Holub helped me immensely."

When Benefield left River Oaks to become superintendent at Willow Creek CC in Beaumont, Texas, he learned two more valuable lessons: The course was being built out of reclaimed rice fields and Benefield learned the construction side of the business. And — he learned Spanish.

"I came in close contact with Spanish-speaking workers, many of whom didn't speak any English at all. So because of that experience, I have a fairly decent background in Spanish. This has been

beneficial."

At Sun Air Country Club in Dundee (near Grenelefe Resort), Benefield came across a totally different communication challenge. The course had one owner who also owned an estate, orange grove, pasture lands and horse stables for his prized Arabians. Benefield was in charge of the all these properties as well as the condominium ground.

"Having one owner really made it simple," he said. "It's probably the best situation. Basically, if you keep the owner happy, you'll be happy. If he's not happy, then you either make him happy or you look elsewhere."

And at Beacon Hill, where the ownership was split among members, Benefield still had other challenges, despite the previously-mentioned turnaround by the greens chairman.

"I think it's more difficult to have a club run by committees," he said, "because you have several people wanting you to do different things at the same time. Many of them came from different parts of the country and now they have to work together. That's a problem because they don't trust the employees. So you can get into a battle of egos between the greens chairman and the club president.

"This is the where it is important for a golf course superintendent to learn to communicate with everyone... the members, the committee chairmen, the golf professional.

"Your pro can make or break you. There have been more golf course superintendents who have lost their jobs because they didn't communicate with their pro. I've always made a special effort, no matter where I've been, to build a special relationship with the pro. I think that this is what kept me at Beacon Woods for

four years."

"For example," he said, "you have a shotgun start at 7:30 in the morning, and 280 people are planning on playing golf that day. But you have rain or a frost, and

the tee times are delayed. Now someone is going to miss his tee time that day, and he's not going to be happy.

"You just can't leave the pro out there, all by himself. You have to go out there and face the members and talk to them. Then you've done your job.

"But a lot of superintendents would turn the other way. Then you've created a problem with your pro."

When Benefield left Beacon Woods for BallenIsles CC at JDM in Palm Beach Gardens, he knew he would be facing quite a different challenge.

JDM's three courses had existed since the mid 1960s and of the three, only the east and north sides of the East course had homes around it. The 1,300 acres was nearly pristine compared to other built-out development communities.

"The membership was very used to this type of course. There wasn't any place else around they could play in such a natural area," he said.

All this changed in 1988 when Hansen Inc. of Philadelphia negotiated with the McArthur Foundation to buy additional property with the intention of developing the acreage. In 1989, the North and South courses were reconfigured to allow for this residential development. Benefield came to BallenIsles in late 1989 and was well aware of the situation.

"First of all, you had members who had been there for 20 years and they've been used to the three courses with just a small amount of development. It didn't matter who was making the changes; all the members knew that someone was

"...it is important for a golf course superintendent to learn to communicate with everyone... the members, the committee chairmen, the golf professional."