



FGCSA welcomes turf world to Palm Beach



The Breakers Hotel and Golf Course was the site of the week-long conference.

400 attend International Turfgrass Research Conference; two Floridians named to leadership positions

BY DR. GEORGE SNYDER

IFAS

Fort Lauderdale Research Center

For the first time ever, Florida hosted the International Turfgrass Research Conference, which was held at the Breakers Resort in Palm Beach, July 18-24. This seventh international conference, sponsored by the International Turfgrass Society, had been held in the USA only once before. Other conference sites have been in England, Germany, France, Canada, and Japan.

Four hundred turfgrass scientists and practitioners representing 24 countries were in attendance for this week-long event. Over 150 papers dealing with all phases of turfgrass production and maintenance were presented. Of particular interest were discussions of pesticide and nutrient fate, quantification of surface characteristics of sports fields, and a critical review of xeriscaping.

In addition to the presentation of scientific papers, a mid-week tour was held to acquaint the participants with turfgrass in south Florida. Visits were made to golf courses, athletic fields, equestrian

facilities, and to the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center. A pre-conference tour visited the research facilities in Gainesville. Fifty-eight spouses participated in a week-long program of activities ranging from a croquet tournament to a tour of south Florida tropical gardens. Social events, which provided time for the participants to get to know each other on an informal basis, included a welcoming dinner, a beach party, and a banquet.

The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association provided a lot of support for the conference. To help promote the event, the FGCSA assisted with a booth at the last two Golf Course Superintendents Association of America exhibitions. The FGCSA took the lead in soliciting golf superintendents in Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade counties who provided gratis rounds of golf for ITRC participants. FGCSA Executive Secretary Marie Roberts assisted with the ITRC registration. And several Palm Beach county courses hosted visits as part of two of the conference mid-week tours.

Although the ITRC moves on to an-

other country, and probably won't be back in the USA for many years, several Floridians will continue to play key roles in the International Turfgrass Society. At the 1993 conference, Dr. John Cisar, turfgrass water specialist at the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, was elected to the ITS board of directors. Dr. George Snyder, professor of soil and water science at the Everglades Research and Education Center, was appointed ITS treasurer for the next four years. Anyone interested in ITS membership should contact Dr. Snyder. The next ITRC is being hosted in 1997 by Australia and New Zealand. It's not too early to be making plans to attend!

NOTE: *All of the papers presented at the conference are included in the 1021-page International Turfgrass Society Research Journal, Volume 7, which is available for \$65.00 from Dr. R.E. Schmidt, VPI & SU, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0404 (Tel. 703-231-9796). Dr. George H. Snyder has some copies available locally (Tel. 407-996-3062).*

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COVER STORY

Photos by Daniel Zelazek

Palm Beach Country

*An emerald jewel
sea passes its*



View from the clubhouse overlooking
Numbers 15, 16 and 18.

Country Club

*Jewel by the azure
diamond jubilee*



BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

In 1917, legendary golf course architect Donald Ross turned 88 acres of pineapple plantation on Palm Beach into the Palm Beach Country Club. Nestling greens and tees along a coral ridge that bisects the property north to south, he created a challenging 6200-yard golf course that traverses back and forth between the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Worth. That ridge running parallel to the beach provides some

unique elevation changes seldom found this far south in Florida.

This emerald jewel by the azure sea lies like a hidden treasure behind ancient hedges of lush, tropical vegetation like those of neighboring estates.

And it is the mature grounds of the golf course and the estates on Palm Beach that provide a remarkable green belt and habitat on this barrier island. The wildlife inventory on the golf course alone ranges from exotic birds like wild parrots, Peking ducks, and swans to

mammals like raccoons and red foxes.

It is summer now and the course is "officially" closed until November. A few of the year-round residents play occasionally during the summer, so the greens are mowed daily. But a lot of the detailed manicuring and grooming so prevalent and necessary in fall, winter and spring give way to major projects and renovations to the turf and infrastructure.

My visit this day found Paul Crawford, the superintendent, overseeing the

From our wildlife populations, you can't tell me that golf courses aren't good for the environment, especially in urban settings.

installation of a variable speed pump station to further maximize his irrigation efficiency.

In fact, the seasonal improvements accomplished over the past summers read like a veritable "How-To" manual on bringing a classic venerable course of the early 1900s up to modern standards with regard to turf quality and regulatory compliance. Before any major turf improvements were undertaken, Paul asked for and received the support of the board of directors in upgrading the maintenance facility. Paul wanted to provide a proper base of operations for the upcoming improvements to the course itself.

Besides a modern equipment building with ample space, other improvements included replacing the underground fuel tanks with above-ground Convault fuel bunkers. All chemical products are now stored in a stand-alone, self-contained Perm-A-Lock building.

"The board of directors wanted to reduce or eliminate the potential for exposure for the club and insure that our

operation was environmentally friendly," said Paul. "From our wildlife populations, you can't tell me that golf courses aren't good for the environment, especially in urban settings."

Once those key issues were settled, Paul set about to upgrade the turf.

"In 1988, we replanted all of the greens in Tifdwarf," he began, "and then in 1990 we tackled the chore of converting the old Ormond bermudagrass fairways to Tifway 419. The work was done by Rodney Davis and Central Florida Turf. They rototilled, de-mucked, regraded, fumigated, and replanted all of the fairways.

"Since we had to bury the muck we excavated, Rodney and I redesigned some of the water hazards to make them more functional and a little more esthetically pleasing. Next we added a Network 8000 irrigation control system, and as you can see, this year we are installing the Synchro-Flo VSP station.

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Green of number 14, a par-four cut into the ridge that gives Palm Beach Country Club unusual elevation changes for a South Florida course.

I sure envied those guys riding those mowers on the maintenance crew. It looked like a better job than carrying those bags!

“First of all, being located on a coastal barrier island, we don’t have access to a natural source of water so we have to use city water. The VSP will allow the system to run at peak efficiency, which will reduce the necessary running time and save electricity.

“Secondly, the soil under the course does not percolate very well. The Network 8000 will allow me to refine my watering schedules so I can put precisely what I need, where I need it, and in the amounts that won’t cause wet spots or waste water.”

“We have accomplished quite a bit over the past few years, and I really appreciate the vision, patience, and support from the club. We were able to see and agree on the big picture and break it down into a series of projects to be completed one at a time. The one guiding principle was that we were to be always

moving in a positive forward direction.”

Before we get too far, let’s go back to Rochester, Mich., where a young Paul Crawford was lugging golf bags as a caddy at Great Oaks Country Club.

“I sure envied those guys riding those mowers on the maintenance crew. It looked like a better job than carrying those bags,” Paul said wistfully. “When I got my first chance, it was only washing the clubhouse windows at the Wolverine Golf Club, but I got to move on to the crew soon after that. I think I was 16 or 17 at the time.

“When I expressed an interest in making it a career, the superintendent suggested that I should enroll in the turf management program at Michigan State University. I did, and boy there were a few eyebrows raised among my peers and family, ‘You want to go to school to learn to be a greenskeeper?’”