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# Two South Florida Teams Win Big!

## Essays Win Trips to John Deere Event for Supts. & Bosses

BY ROBERT G. KLITZ CGCS

General Manager  
Orangebrook Country Club

In 1998, John Deere and the GCSAA developed a partnership to enhance the relationship between the Certified Golf Course Superintendent and the superintendent's employer or supervisor: the GCSAA/John Deere Employer-Superintendent Recognition program.

Twelve two-person teams are selected randomly from superintendent-written essay entries to describe how their employers support or recognize their efforts to increase business efficiencies, enhance agronomic improvements, elevate professional development, support environmental leadership, or improve the image of a professional golf course superintendent.

The winning entrants then participate in a program held in conjunction with John Deere's sponsorship of the PGA Tour's John Deere Classic at the Tournament Players Club at Deere Run in Silvas, Ill.

For my first entry in this program in 1998, I submitted several paragraphs describing my relationship with David Lottes, the vice-president of our company, Golf Hollywood. I did not win. In

1999 I intensified my efforts, assembling a stunning two-page literary masterpiece. This resulted in a phone call from Cathy Hut of the GCSAA. "Did I win?" I asked excitedly.

"No I'm sorry Bob, but we really enjoyed your letter, and would like you to come to New Orleans and speak at the national conference & show about your experiences making the transition from superintendent to general manager?"

A trip to New Orleans? Not bad for



From left: Robert Klitz, CGCS, Orangebrook G.C.; David Fearis, CGCS, GCSAA past president; Alan Weitzel, president of Golf Hollywood, Inc.; and Jeff Gredvig, brand manager for John Deere Inc. team up for the John Deere Charity Scramble at the Rock Island Arsenal Club in Moline, IL. Klitz and Weitzel were selected for their essays entered in the GCSAA/John Deere Superintendent/Employer Recognition Program.

runner up. Finally, I made my third entry attempt with a different strategy. I drafted a letter describing how the president of Golf Hollywood, Alan Weitzel, has supported me through my three years with the company.

Again the phone rang from GCSAA and Cathy Hut very excitedly said, "You won, you won!" I asked if I would be speaking in Dallas and she said, "No, you are going to Moline!"

Sunday, July 23 was our travel day to Illinois. Alan and I met at the airport, and were among the last group of people to board the airplane (that is Alan's style). As we squeezed through first class, gazing longingly at the ice cold beverages these distinguished people were enjoying, we saw a familiar face.

David Court CGCS and his general manager, Gene Paul Stifter, CCM from Boca Lago Country Club in Boca Raton also were among the 12 teams chosen.

How did they get in first class? This was my first of many lessons learned during four days with the amazing Gene Paul

This guy should be running a seminar on how to deal with people. It was

truly amazing to watch this gentleman work a room.

Our flight was on time and uneventful, which is a good thing these days. We arrived at The Radisson Hotel across from John Deere Commons in Moline in a courtesy bus with several of the other participants. Partly cloudy skies, temperature in the low 70s, and minimal humidity — a welcome relief from the heat and humidity of South Florida.

We were greeted by GCSAA staff, Deere company coordinators, and overwhelmed by a huge presentation of our tournament and event amenities: shirts, hats, bag tags, CD-ROMs of Deere Run, leather bags, golf shoes. We were going need larger luggage and a bigger bus to get this stuff back to the airport! We were very impressed.

As we made our way to the hotel counter to check-in, we again had the opportunity to watch the amazing Gene Paul at work. He makes people smile, laugh, and eventually they give him whatever his heart desires. It's no wonder David Court loves his job so much!

The week before we embarked to Moline I had reviewed our itinerary and

noticed that we would have a few hours to kill on Sunday afternoon. I contacted Cathy Hut and she recommended playing a warm-up round of golf at a nearby course. She mentioned that another team from Mira Vista CC in Fort Worth, Texas would also be arriving early on Sunday and that we could join them for a nine-hole friendly competition.

Alan and I met Brian Cloud CGCS and Brian Keelan, general manager in the hotel lobby, hopped in the hotel shuttle bus, and took the scenic route to Highland Springs Golf Course in Rock Island. Thomas L. Hergert is the golf course superintendent of this beautiful golf course. The hills and elevation changes were a good test for the four Southern boys. We wished we had time for the full 18, but we were on a tight schedule, and needed to be back in Moline for the big kick-off reception.

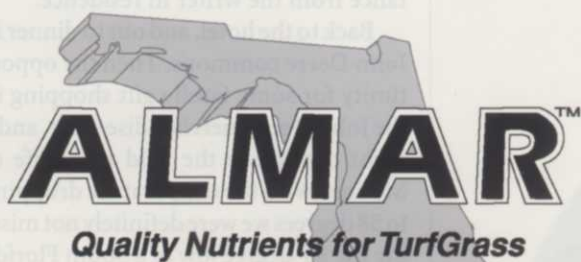
Sunday evening we boarded the bus for our reception at the Deere & Company Administrative Center. The beau-

tifully landscaped setting, and striking iron-and-glass structure was nestled in a hillside in the woods. The reception provided all 12 teams an opportunity to meet and share experiences as the PGA Tour professional pairings were announced for our teams of four.

We were fortunate to be teamed with Brian and Brian again, and our golf professional was Steve Goetze. Ken Edwards from the Deere & Company Golf & Turf Products Division and Clair A. Peterson, manager of Deere & Company's golf event marketing, were introduced to the very excited group of superintendents and their employers. Food and beverages were provided as we met our competitors and toured the Deere & Company Center.

Monday morning started at 7 (hey, we got to sleep in!) with a breakfast on John Deere Commons. We were welcomed by R. Scott Woodhead, GCSAA president, Steve Mona CAE, CEO of GCSAA, and Edwards and Peterson of

*It was quite an overwhelming experience. With our caddies assigned, it was off to the practice range, and the putting greens. Walking past John Daly as he blasted his range balls to the far reaches of the driving range was very impressive.*



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John Deere. Then we were treated to some very entertaining comments regarding several previous Ryder Cup Matches by former PGA of America President Mark Kizziar.

Back in the bus we were, and on our way to the Tournament Players Club at Deere Run in Silvas. As Weitzel said throughout the day, every superintendent should have the opportunity to feel the thrills we felt as we made our way through every step of this wonderful event.

Driving up to the beautiful clubhouse, pulling up in front, I walked to the caddy table to meet the lucky individual who would be carrying my bag. It was quite an overwhelming experience. With our caddies assigned, it was off to the practice range, and the putting greens. Walking past John Daly as he blasted his range balls to the far reaches of the driving range was very impressive.

The pressure was building as our tee time approached.

11:00. Tee-off on No.10 tee. Pose for the ceremonial photo. Three of the four amateurs place the ball in play (yes, I did hit a good shot in play). Unfortunately our touring pro yanked his shot into the four-foot-deep prairie grass (uh-oh). With Weitzel's birdie on our first hole, we were off to a great start.

John Newtal CGCS and his staff had done a tremendous job growing in the golf course on a piece of property with some very dramatic elevation changes. It's a beautiful golf course, in tournament condition, and we had a good group of guys, a great foursome of caddies from area high school golf teams, and a fun PGA Tour professional with a helpful caddy. It was really an experience that will provide us with the memories of a lifetime.

After golf, it was time for the awards reception in the John Deere 18th hole Trophy Suite Sky box. What a fantastic way to finish the day. Our team came in third place due to poor scoring assis-



*FGCSA Secretary/Treasurer David Court, CGCS (shown here) and his general manager, Gene Paul Stifter from the Boca Lago C.C. comprised the other Florida superintendent/employer team selected to participate in this year's John Deere Classic. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

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tance from the writer in residence.

Back to the hotel, and out to dinner in John Deere commons. Then the opportunity for some family gift shopping in the John Deere merchandise store, and a night out to see the wild night life of Moline. With the temperature dropping to 58 degrees we were definitely not missing the 80-degree low of a South Florida evening.

Tuesday morning started with another wonderful breakfast on John Deere Commons, and then back to the bus. Tuesday's golf event was the John Deere Charity Scramble held at the Rock Island Arsenal Golf Club. This historic property was laid out along the Mississippi River and provided outstanding views of the river traffic and the historical buildings on the property.

We again played in a five-man format with four amateurs and a local PGA club professional. The amateur groups were composed of our 12 teams, area John Deere staff, and John Deere distributor representatives from across the country.

Alan and I were paired with David Fearis CGCS, past-president GCSAA,

and Jeff Gredvig, a brand manager for John Deere who explained the significance of John Deere's logo change in 2000, and how powerful and recognizable the John Deere logo has become around the world.

Following an awards luncheon on the front porch of the clubhouse of the Rock Island Arsenal Club, it was back on the bus to get ready for dinner on the Celebration Belle riverboat as we toured the Rock and Mississippi rivers through the early hours of the evening. Then it was back downtown to the renovated historic district for some after dinner entertainment.

Kenny G had been performing in the arena behind our hotel, so the downtown district was filled with locals. This was our last night in town and Alan and I spent our remaining time with Brian, Brian, David and Gene. The locals (Gene Paul referred to them as "The

Molinians") were very friendly, with just about everyone describing some work experience with John Deere.

During our visit we were overwhelmed by the effort that John Deere had put forth on our behalf to make this such an enjoyable event. Deere & Company was entertaining a very large group of people this week, and still they made our small group feel that all of their energies were focused on us. Every detail was covered from transportation, and outstanding service, to smaller details such as a \$50 donation to each caddie's high school golf program.

As Clair Peterson said, "The real value of this program is allowing the employer to understand the significance of the golf course superintendent. The benefit of the relationship is what we're after in this partnership with the GCSAA."

It was obvious from my employer's reaction, that John Deere's efforts had

helped my employer reach the goal Peterson was emphasizing. If Alan told me once, he told me 25 times, "Thank you for writing that essay Bob."

The travel time, and all the activities present participants and their employers the opportunity to improve their communication skills, and get a better understanding about each other's point of view. The only challenge that David, Gene Paul, Alan and I are facing now is how to get invited back next year.

But I'm not worried. I think Gene Paul is working on it.

**Editor's Note:** David Court CGCS and Gene Paul Stifter's teamwork has resulted in Boca Lago becoming the first club in Florida to sign up for the Golfer's For A Better Environment joint grassroots effort by the Florida Turfgrass Association and the University of Florida.

## Call for Articles

This is a call for articles for the 2001 issues of the Florida Green.

Contact Joel D. Jackson, Editor for more information. Phone: 407-248-1971. Fax: 407-248-1971. E-mail: FLGrn@aol.com. All slides and photographs should include identification of persons in the picture and the name of the photographer.

**HANDS ON TOPICS:** Share your best practices and tips for these upcoming topics. Slides or photographs are encouraged.

- Spring 2001 - Fertility Programs
- Summer 2001 - Utility Vehicles
- Fall 2001 - Computers as Management Tools

**SPOTLIGHT:** People and events making news in Florida. From award winners to chapter tournaments and other accomplishments. Send in your story.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S JOURNAL:** Personal observations or experiences related to any phase of the turf management profession.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

General management topics beyond turf. Examples: Education, facilities, personnel, computers, training, etc.

**INDUSTRY NEWS:** News items of interest to Florida superintendents from allied associations in the turf/ horticulture industry.

**OPINION:** Exactly what it means! Articles voicing a personal point of view on any topic concerning Florida superintendents.

**RESEARCH:** A section reserved primarily for university and technical authors to report on research results within the turf industry. Also reports of practical on-course testing.

**RUB OF THE GREEN:** Articles and anecdotes with a humorous twist.

**STEWARDSHIP:** Superintendents are invited to submit ideas and articles about environmental issues and initiatives at their courses.

**Wanted:** Slides and photographs to help tell the stories!

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Joel:

I just read the summer copy of The Florida Green and just wanted to express my admiration to you for its quality.

There's little fluff and the writing is excellent. Much better writing, in fact, than GCM. I looked on the frontispiece to see who edited it and was surprised that it was a working superintendent. It must take a lot of your time to keep it so good.

Just wanted to let you know that someone appreciates what it takes.

Jim DeReuil, GCS  
Kelly Plantation GC  
Destin, Fla

Many thanks for the "atta boy" for the Florida Green. While myself, Dan Jones and Tom Benefield all wore the editor's hat while being full time superintendents, I have been able to take "early retirement" recently and make this my full time/ part time job. For the record Marie Roberts our advertising manager and our publishing consultant are also in the trenches with me to make The Florida Green golden!

Joel Jackson, Editor

## Important Conference Calls

### Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCS

**A**long with Joel Jackson, Darren Davis, Tom Alex, Cary Lewis, and others, I have participated in several conference calls over the past few months with the EPA, the USDA, Bayer Corporation, and other stakeholders regarding the future of Nemacur. I was the only one of our group able to sit in on the last call, so I'll do my best to give an update on this critical issue.

Going into this, I never realized the EPA had such a concern with worker safety and golfer exposure. I thought the basis of concern with Nemacur was ground and surface water contamination. So far, we've spent more time discussing exposure to golfers and golf course workers, with water issues coming to the forefront near the end of the last call.

We have moved past (I hope) the EPA's early opinion that Nemacur should be "off labeled" for use on "Florida-type" soils (sands), and that golf courses do need it for use on areas other than greens and tees. They now understand that golf courses only use fenamiphos once or twice a year on greens and tees, and spot treat other areas of the golf course as needed, rather than wall-to-wall applications.

We've also done our best to explain how we apply the product, both granular and liquid, the timing and amounts we typically apply, how we water it in, and the safety precautions we take for both our workers and the golfers who play our golf courses. We've discussed in detail the differences in exposure risks from using drop vs. rotary spreaders vs. spray applications. I've shared with EPA the fact that my spray tech of 19 years has cholinesterase checked twice a year with no problems noted. We've explained that most of us have tried alternative nematode control products with little or no success, and that losing Nemacur would be devastating to Florida's golf industry, with unintended

negative environmental impacts likely to occur. We've assured them that we care about our employees and the environment.

I'd like to be able to say I am optimistic about our chances of continuing our use of fenamiphos on golf courses. The fact that we are participants in these proceedings and that the EPA has listened to us and has a more favorable view of our "real world" uses of Nemacur is encouraging, but EPA's history dictates caution. From the EPA's very beginning, regulatory action has been based more on politics than science, and while we're now involved in a process that encourages us to think that times have changed, we need only look at the recent ruling on Dursban to indicate otherwise. The most encouraging aspect is Bayer's commitment to this product and this battle.

The real stumbling block seems to be how far apart the EPA and Bayer are on interpretation of risk analysis data. Each has its own studies and they are miles apart on their conclusions. I think the outcome rests with the resolution of this data. Not having seen either side's data (and probably unable to understand it if I did), I can only make the generalization that it seems like the EPA multiplies the safety factor and tries to write regulations on worst-case scenarios. The significance of PPE's (personal protective equipment like respirators, rubber boots and gloves, suits, etc.) is one of the biggest issues of contention between Bayer and the EPA.

From my perspective, it seems the EPA is trying to "idiot-proof" these regulations. Users are not to be trusted to do the right thing for their employees, the environment, or their pocketbooks; and so, too, they are not given the opportunity to demonstrate common sense, environmental responsibility, and economic feasibility. It rankles a bit to think that we as professionals are regulated as if we're idiots or potential criminals, but in our modern "victimhood" society, you understand why they work this way.

The fly in the ointment for either side of the issue is enforceability. The EPA must endeavor to write a law that is enforceable, but in so

doing, common sense and practicality often get swept away in a flood of regulatory gobbledygook. During this last conference call, the EPA challenged us to help come up with suggestions for label restrictions to reduce MOE's (methods of exposure).

Not being the sharpest pencil in the box, the only thing I could come up with was to limit the amount of time an employee could spend applying Nemacur, whatever it was determined through EPA and Bayer's risk analysis data. In other words, if EPA says that any one worker cannot work with

Nemacur for more than two hours a day, then the golf industry could live with that. This, in my opinion, is much more enforceable than regulating acreage per day or other restrictions, since we all recognize that not every golf course operates the same way.

Why limit yourself on a Monday if you're closed. If you're going to bend the rules, would a superintendent more likely fake his log book, or subject an employee to overexposure? The EPA didn't like my suggestion, something about not practical for non-turf users of Nemacur. I didn't quite understand

this – aren't labels specialty written now? No other recommendations came forth during this call.

As for where we stand now, the EPA is going to initiate water monitoring at both agricultural-type sites and drinking-water sites to get a scope of the problem as it now stands. Bayer and EPA will continue to try breaking the impasse over their respective risk analysis data. I have not heard a timetable of when this assessment must be completed, but I'm guessing we have more conference calls ahead of us before a decision is rendered.

## 2001 Florida Green Photo Contest

**Category 1 - Wildlife on the Course:** includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians.

**Category 2 - Course Landscape:** Formal Plantings: includes annuals, shrubs, trees, entrance and tee signs.

**Category 3 - Course Landscape:** Native Plantings: includes aquatic vegetation, grasses, shrubs, trees and wildflowers.

**Category 4 - Scenic Hole Layout Shots:** includes sunrises, sunsets, frosts, storms and any other golf hole view.

### Prizes

- 1 st Place (\$100) and 2 nd Place (\$50) in each category.
- Editor's Choice-Best Overall Photo - \$100.
- All winning entries published in the Fall 2001 issue.

### Easy Rules

1. Color prints or slides. Prefer prints. Only one entry per category.
2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member's course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.
3. Attach a label to the back of the print or slide which identifies the category, course and photographer. DO NOT WRITE



Category 2 — Course Landscape Formal Plantings. Rose garden on the 18th hole. Disney's Lake Buena Vista Club. Photo by Joel Jackson.

4. DIRECTLY ON THE BACK OF THE PRINT. Each photo shall be attached to an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Attach the print to the paper using a loop of masking tape on the back of the photo. Slides must be easily removable for viewing.
4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be

- typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the print or slide.
5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.
6. Mail entries in a bend proof package to Joel D. Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando 32819. No entries accepted postmarked after August 1, 2001.

**C**ashing in on the name recognition of the “Tif” (Tifton, Ga.) brand name, it appears that TifEagle is becoming the most popular of the new ultradwarf grasses. For those willing to take a leap of faith with the new ultra-low-growing turfgrasses, TifEagle is the name I’m hearing most when courses are electing to use an ultradwarf for new

construction or renovating old, contaminated greens.

Not all Tifdwarf greens suffer from mutations. Those courses who have not had off-type problems with their Tifdwarf greens, are often electing to stay the course and replant with foundation Tifdwarf material. They are still maintaining a wait-and-see attitude since the new grasses are still relatively young. Growing the new ultradwarf varieties requires

changing some of your old Tifdwarf habits and getting used to new turf responses to environmental and cultural practices. There’s no denying they can be cut lower, but that’s only part of the story.

But courses that have suffered through the puffy, scalpy greens with off-type contamination are looking for some relief if they’re going to the expense of regrassing. There are several varieties to choose from out there in the marketplace, but the Georgia boys have got turf history and tradition on their side and they have steam rolled the competition lately.

Champion, the Texas version of the new ultradwarfs took the stage first and, being first out of the blocks, had an advantage. With an aggressive marketing and planting plan and good customer service, Champion still has a strong following. I know a Florida superintendent who learned to grow it at one

course, and elected to plant it at his new course as well. Familiarity sometimes does breed content.

Florida’s entry in the ultradwarf wars produced the variety called FloraDwarf. Those who grow it like it and in many side-by-side comparisons, the pros and cons of each of the new varieties seem to balance out overall. But there’s no denying that a recognizable brand name coupled with a strong, organized marketing campaign have made TifEagle the number-one seller to date.

It would seem to me that the Florida sod producers might think more about organizing like their Georgia colleagues in order to promote Florida-bred grasses and to plow back royalties from sales into the Florida Turfgrass Association’s Research Foundation. Sort of a self-sustaining concept. As for-profit businesses, they already have sales and marketing contacts in place unlike the Turfgrass Association, but I guess that would take a lot of teamwork among traditional competitors. Wonder how those “Dawgs” have been able to scoop the “Gators” all these years when it comes to grass sales?

But all the buzz and hype doesn’t mean a thing if you’re choosing any of these grasses in the blind. The best thing to do is to plant test plots all of the varieties you are considering — whether Tifdwarf or the ultradwarfs. Subject them to the same maintenance regimes and hopefully wear patterns. A putting green is probably the best site to use. Grow them for at least a year and then make up your own mind, by selecting a grass that best fits your club’s lifestyle, budget and your work ethic.

Meanwhile, as we really enter the new millennium on Jan. 1, 2001, I urge you to resolve to take a more active role in your professional association. There are issues that need your attention and they will be easier to address if we all work together to find solutions.

Happy New Year to one and all.

## Florida, The Eagle Has Landed

### Green Side Up



Joel Jackson, CGCS  
Editor



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estimates of all Poa trivs in test-University of Fla, Gainesville 1997-98 putting green trials highest seed count of all Poa trivs - University of Florida. - 1997-98.

Stardust

**"Highest density"**

1995-96 overseeded greens University of Arizona

**"Highest percent ground cover"**

University of Florida. 1995

**"Highest mean ball speed scores"**

1994-95 overseeded Bermuda greens--University of Arizona.

**"Best monthly/seasonal turf color"**

of all Poa trivs overseeded on tifway Bermuda--University of Fla. 1994-95.

**"Highest seasonal average"**

of all Poa trivs"--putting greens evaluation--1997-98 Mississippi State University.

Cypress

**"Highest mean for turf color"**

1996-97 putting green overseeding trial, Clemson University.

**"Highest quality rating"**

of all entries in the 1996 Bermuda Triangle Research Center, Palm Springs, California.