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From the Beltway to the Fairway



Regulators Get Real-World View of Responsible Environmental Management

By Kyle D. Sweet, CGCS

On March 30, the Old Collier Golf Club hosted the annual 2009 Regulatory Tour where the EPA, USDA, Florida Farm Bureau and the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association were represented.

This long-standing annual tour of Florida agriculture operations was organized by Mike Aerts, Florida Fruit and Vegetable director of marketing and membership; Dan Botts, vice president of industry resources; and Tim Hiers, maintenance director of the Old Collier Golf Club.

Old Collier has served as the first stop for the group's weeklong tour for the past five or six years after the FGCSA was invited to help host the tour since it is a convenient stop near the Southwest Florida International Airport in Ft. Myers. The tour also includes visits to Lee County Mosquito Control and South Florida production

Tim Hiers (yellow shirt) explains golf maintenance practices during one of many stops on the Old Collier course during the March 2009 Regulator Tour. Photo by Mike Aerts.

facilities for cattle, citrus, sugar cane and other row crops, sod and ornamentals.

Would it surprise you that many of the participants have never been on a golf course?

Each year the tour provides the opportunity to introduce a new group of lawmakers and regulators to the golf course industry at the ground level. Touring the entire group through the golf course on golf carts is by far the best way for them to learn what we do as managers and for them to gain an understanding of the challenges that superintendents face each day.

Besides, the carts are fun and who doesn't like spending a March afternoon in the fresh air on a golf course? Sunglasses, hats and wide open views replace the office attire and indoor atmosphere on a first introduction for many into our world of golf course management.

Superintendents are dedicated to preservation and conservation of our properties. How we utilize chosen chemicals with regard to frequency, thresholds and product decision-making is very important to convey to those who make the rules.

Hiers and other South Florida superintendents have taken the time to educate these decision-makers on not only pesticide issues, but on other

topics such as fertility, irrigation water use, wildlife management, energy conservation and maintenance facility operations.

Combined, this is an extensive list and an integral part of being a superintendent in today's times. Once presented with this information, the group gains an incredible understanding of the Old Collier operation and, in turn, an understanding of the golf course industry trends and abilities to maintain high level course conditioning while not only protecting habitats, but in many cases enhancing them.

All of this work is capped with a putting contest and dinner to wrap up the visit. By day's end, industry professionals have answered many questions and provided much-needed insight to the tour participants.

Florida superintendents should be thankful that this effort is made each March, undoubtedly going a long way toward protecting the practices that we know are crucial to our valuable profession.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The passenger golf carts rented by the FGCSA for the regulator tour are also used by Old Collier for some public outreach and education by hosting annual tours for 5th graders from a nearby elementary school.



Remnant grasses in old collars can contaminate new greens if not taken care of quickly.
Photo by Todd Lowe.

Do Your Greens Have 'Ring Around the Collar?'

By Todd Lowe

Do you remember the old Woolite® commercial, about the housewife who tries to remove the “ring around the collar” from her husband’s dress shirts? The woman remains upset and frustrated until a little detergent is applied to remove the stain and clean the shirt. “Stains” can also occur on golf course putting greens in the form of weedy grasses, and this is extremely frustrating for golf course superintendents. While no amount of Woolite® can be applied to clean the

Continues on page 34

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Chris Cartin

Superintendent,
Tuscawilla Country Club and
past President CFGCSA



'Ring Around the Collar'

(Continued from page 33)

greens, there are a few steps to take to improve turf quality and ensure such instances do not occur.

I have noticed a particular situation over the past few years following putting green renovation or regrassing, where a different strain of bermudagrass encroaches onto the putting green perimeters. This grass is visibly different from both the new grass and Tifway that exists on most of the collars. The “stain” is what I refer to as remnant grass, as it was a grass that most likely existed on the previous putting greens and slowly encroached into the collars. Unlike Tifway bermudagrass that naturally exists in roughs, remnant grass is adapted to low mowing and can easily creep back onto the new greens shortly after renovation.

Most standard putting green regrassings or renovations include locating putting green perimeters, removing the old grass/soil from the

putting surfaces, fumigating the new mix, and planting new bermudagrass sprigs. Coarse-textured bermudagrasses that exist in golf course roughs can slowly encroach onto golf course putting greens over time but are relegated to perimeters, as they scalp when mowed low. However, remnant grass can quickly encroach from the putting green collars onto the new putting surfaces, as they thrive under low mowing.

Perimeter contamination from encroachment of any grass is a nuisance; but, once remnant grass establishes into putting green perimeters it can quickly spread throughout the green interiors. New plantlets are most likely dispersed through vertical mowing and/or core aeration. In each case that I have observed remnant contamination, hundreds of small patches were dispersed throughout the putting greens within five or six years after regrassing.

If you have ring around the collar, deal with it quickly and do not allow it a chance to spread. Remove the

contaminant physically with a sod cutter or a hex plugger and replace it with putting green turf. Ideally, your golf course has a nursery green to plug out contaminated areas, but commercial sod will also work. If the encroachment cannot be dealt with, it might be advised to simply bring in the putting green perimeters slightly through mowing so that the chance of widespread contamination from cultivation practices is reduced.

Avoid ring around the collar altogether by killing and removing the existing collars during renovation and fumigating both putting surfaces and collars prior to regrassing. Not only will this practice improve genetic purity but will also kill plant-parasitic nematodes that may exist within putting green collars. Nematodes can quickly invade putting green perimeters and literally suck the life from the turf. The extra fumigation and grass required for this practice will cost more initially, but will save a lot of money (and perhaps your job) in the long run.



The shop tour through Seminole County was open to equipment technicians, superintendents and assistants. Photo by Frank Eckert

Bus was Full for Dealers' 2009 Central Florida Shop Tour

By Frank Eckert

The 4th Annual Central Florida Shop tour March 18 was a tremendous success. The event is sponsored by three area turf equipment dealers— Coastal Equipment Systems (John Deere), Wesco Turf (Toro), and Golf Ventures (Jacobsen).

This year the focus was in Seminole County where we visited The Legacy Club at Alauqua Lakes (John Deere), Interlachen Country Club (Jacobsen) and Wesco's (Toro)

Facility in Lake Mary. Equipment and shop presentations were given by principals at each venue with additional comments and Q&A sessions by the host superintendents and mechanics.

Attendance is open to all equipment technicians, superintendents and assistants on a first-come, first-served basis. Attendance was unusually strong this year and the charter bus was full.

Hey this thing is beginning to catch on!



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WILDLIFE TOURS 101

Feather Your Nest

By Craig Weyandt

Ecotourism is growing in popularity every year. You can't pick up a paper today without reading something about the environment. People will pay thousands of dollars each year to travel to faraway places to see animals in their natural environment. A commonly accepted definition of ecotourism is; "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." Does that sound like a golf course or what? Only problem is, people don't know it and were not telling them.

For the past five years, I have been conducting wildlife tours (*ecotourism, if you will*) at The Moorings Club. The idea was not mine but Shelly Foy's of the USGA Green Section. Originally I wanted to put up nesting boxes at the club and Shelly suggested that I use ornithologist George McBath to assist me. George, who has done a lot of work on Florida golf courses, said he could put up the nesting boxes on one day and conduct an Audubon Tour on the next.

Ever since then I have gone from having one tour a year to four tours per year. While George was only able to conduct that one tour with me, it was enough to plant the seed and I eagerly continue the program today.

Why I do it? I like to think of it as "feathering your nest." Please excuse the pun. What I mean is that I am educating the members not only about Florida native plants, animals, migratory species, endangered or threatened species, but I'm also able to have one-on-one communication to be able to explain the golf course maintenance practices we use that work with nature, not destroy it.

Some of the facts that I try to drive home:

- We are water purifiers, not water



users. We recycle effluent water through the turf, returning it to the surficial aquifer cleaner than it was.

- We take soil samples to determine nutrient needs. We only fertilize when and where we need to. Fertilizer is expensive. Wasting it does not make good business or environmental sense.

- Chemical use is very limited and most of the chemicals we use on the course can be purchased at any home improvement center. Spot spraying makes up 90 percent of our weed control program.

- We use a solar-powered weather station to determine irrigation needs. The weather station calculates the evapotranspiration rate (ET) and changes the watering times for every head on the course each night to water based only on the turf loss of that day. Wonder if their home sprinkler systems do that?

- The sabal palms on the course have not been trimmed in five years. Not because we can't afford it, but because there is no need. Sabal palms are self pruning and removing green fronds removes a food source of the tree. By removing the "boots" on the palms we take away nesting sites for birds and the berries are a food source for overwintering and migratory birds.

Those are just a few of the points that I try to drive home when on the tours but it's the one-on-one interactions with the members that means the most. When else would you get to explain your maintenance practices to your members in such an up close and personal matter?

So here's what I do:

I have a sign-up list for the members

or guests placed in an accessible location (ours is in the pro shop). I limit the number on the tour to 25. It's much easier to keep the group together and avoid too many distracting side conversations.

I sometimes invite a local expert on wildlife. My guest comes to me from the "Environmental Learning Center" but there is also the local Audubon society, Florida Fish & Game, etc. Be creative! While you don't have to invite anyone, you can kill two birds with one stone.

Did I just say that?.

What I mean is, you can learn, the members can learn and you can educate two audiences about what really happens on a golf course.

Know your route and walk it in advance. This way you will know approximately how long it will take and can make notes of points of interest. Bring your guest along so he/she is familiar with the site in advance and see what ideas they may have. For example you may have a dead tree (snag) on your course that you can explain the tree is not dead, but alive with wildlife. I also like to demonstrate a soap flush and talk about our insect control program. The weather station is always a big hit.

Every golf course is different and unique with its own challenges. Once again, be creative.

We all have a love of nature. I'm sure it's one of the reasons that you are in this business. Share it with your members and guests and that passion will shine through. We all need to take a proactive stance on showing just what environmental stewards we really are.

Southwood GC Earns Audubon Certification

SouthWood Golf Club – the Fred Couples and Gene Bates-designed course owned by The St. Joe Company and managed by Billy Casper Golf –has been designated “Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary” for environmental stewardship by Audubon International.

SouthWood was specifically commended for water quality management, outreach and education. The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses emphasizes maximizing efficiency and minimizing the potentially harmful effects golf operations can have.

“Environmental conservation and education are key components to golf course operations and maintenance at SouthWood,” says Eddie Snipes, superintendent and chief environmental steward. “The St. Joe



Eddie Snipes

Company, Billy Casper Golf and SouthWood Golf Club are committed to creating sustainable places to live, work and play.” A public facility, SouthWood involves members in projects such as birdwatching, wildlife inventorying, funding for planting projects and supporting local environmental groups. The course developed a comprehensive water-quality management plan that includes minimizing chemical additives, extensive vegetative buffers and protecting streams and wetlands.

“SouthWood Golf Club has shown a strong commitment to its environmental program and should be commended for its efforts,” said Jim

Sluiter, staff ecologist for the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programs. “Courses must demonstrate that they are maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas.”

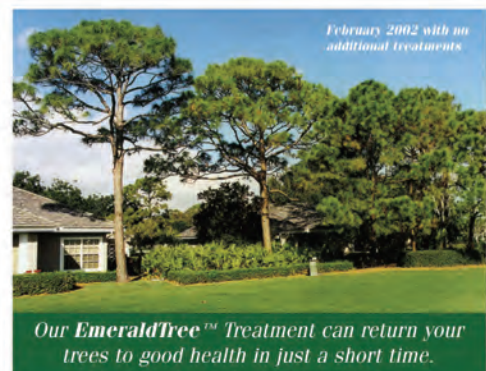
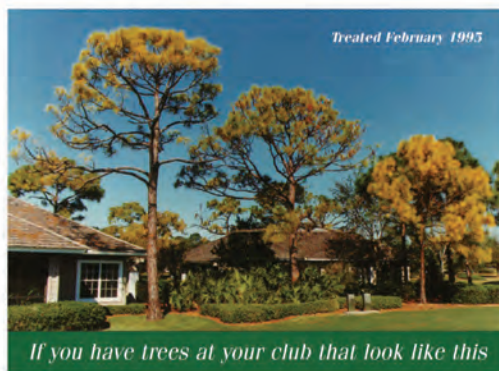
According to Audubon International, a golf facility must exhibit excellence in several categories: Water Conservation, Outreach and Education, Water Quality Management, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Wildlife & Habitat Management, and Environmental Planning to achieve certification. In previous years, SouthWood received recognition in the latter three categories.

SouthWood Golf Club was designed by PGA Tour player Fred Couples and architect Gene Bates. Most recently, the course was ranked one of the “Top 50 Courses for Women” by *Golf For Women* and named among the Top-10 layouts of the new millennium by *Travel + Leisure Golf*.

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Black Diamond Earns Audubon Certification

Black Diamond Ranch has been designated a “Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary” by Audubon International. David Court, CGCS, superintendent at Black Diamond Ranch, has led the effort to obtain sanctuary status on the course and is being recognized for environmental stewardship by Audubon International. Black Diamond Ranch is the 93rd course in Florida and the 694th in the world to receive the honor.

“Black Diamond Ranch has shown a strong commitment to its environmental program. They are to be commended for their efforts to provide a sanctuary for wildlife on the golf course property,” said Jim Sluiter, staff ecologist for the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Programs.

“To reach certification, a course must demonstrate that they are maintaining

a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas,” explained Sluiter. These categories include Environmental Planning, Wildlife & Habitat Management, Outreach and Education, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management.

“I feel that we have accomplished a lot in a short time and our group is proud that we can show that golf courses can be one with the environment,” said David Court. “Black Diamond has a lot of natural habitat that has been incorporated into the design of a beautiful golf course setting.

“The architect, Tom Fazio, and owner, Stan Olsen have given thought into water conservation as well as maintaining the natural beauty for so many birds and wildlife to call home or just to pass through. It is great to know that we share the same space with bobcats, coyotes, fox squirrels, raccoons and alligators. The birding is great

Black Diamond has a lot of natural habitat that has been incorporated into the design of a beautiful golf course setting. Tom Fazio and owner Stan Olsen have given thought into water conservation...



David Court, CGCS

too with over 30 types of birds on the property.”

Black Diamond Ranch is managed by Troon Golf, headquartered in Scottsdale, Ariz.

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P R O V E N S O L U T I O N S

Taking Care of Business



**GREEN SIDE UP
By JOEL JACKSON**

It's no secret that new course construction has been flat for a couple of years along with the participation level of golfers in general. In 2007, the National Golf Foundation reported that course closings outnumbered openings. Those are foreboding tidings indeed for those who depend on the golf industry for a living.

You can talk about the tough economic times, but don't be paralyzed into inaction by all the gloom and doom in the press. Misery is their stock and trade. The people who think creatively and take action instead of sitting and waiting for things to change will have the best chance to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Mark my words; there will be an end to the tunnel. We're beginning to see some signs of that now. But no matter how the economy recovers, things will be different from before.

Paul Grose, president of the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative, recently

outlined some important characteristics which companies that survive and thrive typically exhibit. I thought I would apply them specifically to golf courses.

DIVERSIFY

Can't change a golf course into an amusement park, but you can increase your customer base by getting in on the "Grow the Game" mantra. Kill off some of the old dinosaur habits and create some times for new golfers to get on the course without a lot of pressure to be polished players. Cripes, it still takes the pros more than 5 hours to play 18 holes.

EFFICIENCIES

Must haves vs. Nice to Haves. Must you have green sand to topdress divots or could you get by with something less expensive. Handmowing tees is not in the list of things you must do to have decent tees, but having well trained, motivated operators is a must. Raking bunkers daily is something you can cut back on. After all it's the golfer's responsibility to rake out his or her tracks. You can make your own list based on your course's old ways of doing things.

The cost of materials, chemicals, fertilizers and

...learning how to better take care of business during these tough times is just another one of those challenges...

fuel take larger cuts out of the budgets you have to work with. Being as efficient as possible is the best way to counter those uncontrollable costs.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We don't always see the golfers when they walk in the door but we sure can wave and say "Hi!" out on the golf course, or help look for a ball if we saw it go into the woods as we drive by. Golfers will also need to recognize that, with smaller crews, we need to keep mowing so stopping and turning off the engine might not be a good option if the club is to remain solvent.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

We know it's the backbone of any operation, so developing your own leadership skills and being a good listener, coach and teacher are essential. Keep a positive outlook and don't mope around, it's contagious and shows in the work product.

SET OBJECTIVES

This goes for the whole club and means having goals for where you want to be in one, five and ten years from now. You can apply that to your own department as well and work to make it fit the big picture for the whole operation and your own personal achievement.

PRIDE IN THE PRODUCT

When you have done the best you can with what you have, be proud and unafraid to market your product from the playing conditions to the whole golf experience at your club. Don't get into greens fee price wars, but rather

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place good value on your product based on the service and conditions you give to the customers.

If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times; golf course superintendents are some of the most adaptable and creative people I know. So learning how to better take care of business during these tough times is just another one of those challenges I know you can turn into an opportunity to succeed.