

\$1,000. Vargas Altamirano is from Costa Rica and plans to use his education to create a strategic alliance between researchers and other turf professionals working in the similar climates of Florida and Latin America.

BRADLEY WILLIAMS received the Max J. McQuade Memorial Scholarship awarding \$1,000. Williams earned a bachelor's degree in soil science from the University of Wisconsin. For the past seven summers, Williams interned at golf courses in Wisconsin and Colorado. Upon graduation, he intends to pursue a career in golf course management in Florida.

FLORIDA TURFGRASS RESEARCH FOUNDATION LIVE AUCTION

The Florida Turfgrass Research Foundation announced that the 2009 Live Auction Fundraiser, held in conjunction with the 57th Annual Conference & Show, raised \$4,400 for turfgrass research and student scholar-

ships. Because of participants' support, the FTRF is able to continue funding valuable turfgrass research and supporting turfgrass students who are the industry's future.

**USGA REPORT
Early Season
Golfer And Disease
Concerns**

By John H. Foy

The Florida winter golf season is under way. While play is now increasing, rounds and membership levels are still down at many courses compared to just two years ago. Many courses and clubs throughout the state continue to deal with very challenging times.

With reduced revenues, cuts in operating budgets and capital expenditures have been mandated at essentially all facilities. However, based on Turf Advisory Service visits in late autumn,

appropriate and good quality course conditioning for daily play is being provided. Many courses are operating with reduced staff, which has required reductions in grooming and manicuring practices of perimeter areas and hazards. So far, this change has not been noticed by most golfers.

In the central and northern Florida, elimination or reductions in large-acreage winter overseeding programs also has been a common cost-saving measure. Large-acreage overseeding is not an economic, agronomic, or environmentally sustainable course-management practice.

As bermudagrass enters into a semi-to fully-dormant stage, which is the normal response to colder temperatures, quality conditioning can still be provided. Aggressive and ongoing traffic management must be employed when turf is not actively growing, and recovery from wear damage cannot occur, regardless of inputs. While we still have a way

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to go, golfers are beginning to understand and accept that green color is not a critical factor in course conditioning and quality.

Unfortunately, however, unrealistic demands and expectations for fast to very fast putting green speeds have been a concern at some courses. In Florida, slow, soft, and wet putting green conditions in the fall was a legitimate concern when establishing a winter overseeding cover on Tifdwarf bermudagrass. This concern was compounded by the fact that putting greens at northern golf courses were in superb condition and were used as a basis of comparison for golfers returning to their Florida courses.

Today with ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivars now being the base turf on putting greens at most Florida courses, winter overseeding is no longer necessary, and thus it is possible to routinely provide a smooth and true ball roll along with putting speeds in the range of 9.5 to 10.5 ft. on the Stimpmeter.

This is certainly appropriate conditioning for the vast majority of golfers. There are always a few who tend to be the most vocal, always demanding faster putting speeds. With more frequent double cutting, or cutting and rolling, faster putting speeds can be maintained. Along with the necessary equipment, additional labor hours and time must be available to routinely conduct these practices, which incurs additional cost.

While the ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivars can tolerate extremely low heights of cut, sufficient leaf surface area must be present during the late summer and fall for sustained growth, photosynthesis, carbohydrate production, and storage. This is critical for properly preparing the base turf to survive the late fall, winter, and spring months. Maintaining slightly elevated heights of cut during the fall is necessary, and once cooler temperatures prevail, putting speeds will increase. If turf health and coverage is compromised

or sacrificed early on, producing a full recovery during the winter is not possible.

Recently, putting green disease outbreaks have been another concern in central to southern Florida. Going back to October, rainfall has been well below average; however, the persistence of warm and humid conditions, along with reduced sunlight intensity, resulted in moderate to severe outbreaks of leaf spot disease on putting greens, tees, and fairway areas. While not necessarily desirable, continuation or implementation of fungicide treatments is advised.

Extreme care also needs to be exercised with nitrogen fertilization and supplemental irrigation so as not to further favor disease development. If a disease problem is suspected, submit samples to the University of Florida's Rapid Turfgrass Diagnostic Service. For more information on this tool, access their website at <http://turfpath.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

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ACSP Certifies Florida Courses As Sanctuaries

SARASOTA NATIONAL GOLF CLUB

Sarasota National Golf Club recently achieved designation as a Certified Silver Audubon International Signature Sanctuary. Signature certification is awarded only to new developments that are designed, constructed, and maintained according to Audubon International's precise planning standards and environmental disciplines. The focus of the Signature Program is to promote sound land-management practices and appropriate land-use changes based on sound scientific research. This is the first project in Sarasota County to become certified through the Signature Program.

Developed by Tuscano, LLC as an amenity to a planned development in Venice, the 18-hole, Gordon Lewis-designed course features oak forest and Florida scrub with many wet habitats created for stormwater control and treatment.

The entire development, covering 2,418 acres, features more than 71 acres of restored and enhanced wetlands, 477 acres of preserved jurisdictional wetlands, and more than 500 acres of upland preserve plus the removal of more than 125 acres of invasive plant materials including maleleuca, and Brazilian pepper.

Focusing on sustaining the potable water supply in Florida, for irrigation Sarasota National uses reclaimed water from the local wastewater treatment plant. Good water quality of receiving waters (natural and man-made lakes) within the golf course and downstream waters was also one of the highest priorities.

"Sarasota National golf course was planned and is managed to incorporate golf course play with existing and

preserved natural features including forested and freshwater marsh wetlands, live oak hammocks and preserved palmetto prairie," said Signature Programs Director Nancy Richardson. "More than 600 acres of golf course and other open space/recreational areas are an integral part of the overall open space/preserve connecting to regional corridors including Forked Creek and Lemon Bay Aquatic Preserve."

To date, 87 projects internationally have achieved certification through



The Sarasota National property preserved and enhanced hundreds of acres of native habitat and wildlife corridors.

the Signature Program. Only 15 in Florida have achieved the coveted Silver Signature Certification.

– Nancy E. Richardson

OLD CORKSCREW

Old Corkscrew, an 18-hole golf facility on Corkscrew Road between Fort Myers and Naples, recently was re-certified for the second time since its designation as the first Silver Signature Sanctuary in Lee County.

Enhanced through the restoration of a historic flow way through the property, the course features 40 acres of preserved wetland habitat and more than 300,000 native plants introduced strategically in landscaping and re-vegetation of disturbed areas throughout the property. The golfing experience on this 275-acre site is enhanced by the

native oak hammocks, pines, palms, and palmettos with beautiful vistas of lakes and preserves.

– Nancy E. Richardson

SHADOW WOOD COUNTRY CLUB

The golf courses at Shadow Wood CC and Shadow Wood Preserve have retained their designations as Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses. To reach certification, a course must

demonstrate that it is maintaining a high degree of environmental quality in a number of areas including: Environmental Planning, Wildlife & Habitat Management, Outreach and Education, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management.

"Shadow Wood CC and Shadow Wood Preserve have 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 at Audubon International.

Shadow Wood CC course and the Shadow Wood Preserve course are among 95 courses in Florida and 709 courses in the world to receive the honor. The Shadow Wood golf courses were each designated as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 2006. After designation, courses go through a certification process every two years.

This year, as part of the recertification process, Eric Ruha, director of golf operations at Shadow Wood CC and Shadow Wood Preserve, required a visit by a local environmental expert who conducted the site visit and sent his observations to Audubon International.

"The best part of our job as golf course managers is the environment we get to call our office," explained Ruha.

“There is nothing more rewarding than riding in at the end of the day as the sun goes down, admiring nature’s handy work. We’re fortunate to work for the Bonita Bay Group who has been committed to environmental excellence from the beginning and continues to foster these types of relationships.”

“We see the site visit as an important component of a course’s recertification,” stated Sluiter. “It provides an objective verification of some of the more visible aspects of the course’s environmental management activities. In addition, it offers an opportunity for golf course representatives to share publicly some of the voluntary actions they have taken to protect and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around them.”

– Jennifer Laderer

VICTORIA HILLS GOLF CLUB

Victoria Hills Golf Club – the award-winning, Ron Garl-designed

course owned by The St. Joe Company and managed by Billy Casper Golf – has been designated a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary for environmental stewardship by Audubon International.

In attaining certification from the conservation group, Victoria Hills’ 18-hole layout successfully maintains sound environmental practices in six key areas: environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, outreach and education, chemical use reduction, water conservation, and water quality management.

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses helps protect the environment and preserve the natural heritage of the game of golf. It emphasizes maximizing efficiency and minimizing the potentially harmful effects golf operations can have.

“Environmental conservation and education are key components to golf course operations here,” says Juan

Perez, head superintendent at Victoria Hills. “The St. Joe Company, Billy Casper Golf and Victoria Hills Golf Club are committed to upholding strict environmental practices that create sustainable places to live, work and play.”

“The unwavering commitment from the Victoria Hills team to create and maintain a sound environmental program is exceptional,” says Peter Hill, chairman and CEO of BCG. “We’re very proud of all courses which have become members of the elite group to achieve prestigious ‘Sanctuary’ status.”

Following the Audubon International-approved steps for an environmentally-friendly golf course reduces waste and promotes efficient operations. An effective program results in a reduction of maintenance costs, including insurance premiums, energy, water, pesticides, fertilizer, equipment wear and labor.

– Shane Sharp and Bill Feidler

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**KEYBOARD
RANTINGS**



**GREEN SIDE UP
BY JOEL JACKSON**

How can EPA come up with one number for fifty states without undoing nature and wrecking local budgets trying to comply?... If you feel like running off at the keyboard, don't write me, write your legislators. If more of us did that, we could clear up some of that gloom and doom.

Happy New Year and I mean it. I'm tired of all this gloom and doom stuff. Here's some extemporaneous explanations of the world's current status.

CARBON FOOTPRINT – This has been a man-made problem since Cro-Magnon man began tracking ashes from the cooking fire all around the cave. The Neanderthals were “greener” because they didn't have as much fire, but then they also couldn't live in those European caves and cross the Siberian Peninsula until the glaciers receded, and wasn't that before man started burning lots of wood?

CLIMATE CHANGE – I'll guarantee you it will get colder this winter and it will warm up in the spring and summer. Always has and always will. We will have some years with more hurricanes and some with less. Always have and always will. The people who chose to build homes and live on coastal islands formed by eroded and water-borne sand

particles or in river flood plains will be flooded and washed out again. Always have and always will. Come to think of it the more things change the more they stay the same.

TREE RINGS AND GLOBAL WARMING – As long as the planet was in a warming cycle global warming scientists correlated the warming by measuring tree ring width. When the tree rings started getting narrower and suggested a change to a cooling cycle, the global warming advocates cut down the trees and made them into hockey sticks to use as graphs to perpetuate their theory. In real hockey you get penalized for high sticking. Our leaders need to review the rules before they put us all in the penalty box.

SCIENCE IS NOT A FOUR LETTER WORD – Dear environmental activist, Show us your data gathered by using the scientific method and subjected to rigorous independent peer review and we'll show you ours. By the way data is a four letter word. You quote lots of data, but you never show us the verifiable science behind it.

BIG BROTHER LANDSCAPE COMPANY – Otherwise known as the EPA. It's not enough that water management districts and authorities across the USA monitor their watersheds and aquifers and impose water use restrictions based on real time pressures on local aquifers. No the EPA is seeking to issue a uniform 50-state watering restriction of twice per week.

To further intrude into private property matters, EPA is proposing all new homes only have 40 percent of their landscape in irrigated turf. Not satisfied with those intrusions into local governance and homeownership, the EPA says it will issue a magic number to limit the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in all U.S. water bodies with Florida being the guinea pig model.

Where will EPA get the data to make such a determination for every creek, river, lake and bay in the U.S.? They'll get it from the states of course or not use it all, if their crystal ball isn't on the fritz. According to data gathered by our FLDEP over the past ten years, current nutrient levels in our waterways vary tremendously depending on the region, rainfall patterns, soils and potential nutrient inputs. How can EPA come up with

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one number for fifty states without undoing nature and wrecking local budgets trying to comply?

I see I'm in danger of going over my word budget for this column. While going over budget seems to be a trend for congress, I could get in real trouble with our publisher. If you feel like running off at the keyboard, don't write me, write your legislators. If more of us did that, we could clear up some of that gloom and doom. ■

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