

Supers urged to back their mechanics

BY PETER BLAIS

Superintendents should support their mechanics as they attempt to form professional associations around the country, according to a speaker at February's Golf Course Superintendents Association of America annual conference in Orlando.

"The bottom line is that we as superintendents should encourage mechanics in their professional development. The pluses of an association far outweigh the negatives," said Bruce Williams, head superintendent of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill.

Williams made his comments

during the superintendent conference's first-ever mechanics session attended by 100 mechanics, superintendents and equipment manufacturers.

"All three groups must work together if we're going to make these associations successful," said Williams.

There are a handful of regional mechanics associations, mostly in the Southeast. Organizers of the mechanics session hope their efforts will encourage mechanics in other regions to form their own associations, which could one day lead to a national organization, like the GCSAA.

But is an association necessary for mechanics? Definitely, according to Williams, who is president of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

"An association is formed by individuals with a common interest. Golf course mechanics need a forum to express themselves and exchange ideas on equipment maintenance and repair. The entire industry and superintendents at the individual courses will benefit from mechanics joining and participating in an association," said Williams.

But there are individual responsibilities in belonging to an association

that Williams has observed as president of the Midwest association and 12-year member of the national association. They include:

- Attend meetings. "An association just can't function without proper attendance."
- Start meetings on time.
- Pay dues. "Don't ask the superintendent for a \$30 check the day your fee is due. Superintendents have to budget for things like that and need to know well beforehand."
- Be supportive. "Be loyal and enthusiastic. There's nothing worse than a group of naysayers that try to drag everyone else down. Be part of

the positive image."

• Complete assignments. "That will take a big load off the association's leaders."

• Get work done. "Don't let your volunteer (association) work interfere with your employment. Some of your association duties have to be done out of the workplace. If you find the association taking up 25 or 30 percent of your time, you've got a problem."

But what are the rewards to the individual mechanic?

First are the obvious ones — improving job skills and developing professionalism.

"It can make your job easier and let you do it quicker. It can make the whole operation run more smoothly," said Williams.

"When superintendents formed their organizations back in the 1920s, many weren't allowed in the clubhouse. They had to meet in the shops. It took awhile to gain professional acceptance. Similarly mechanics will work toward that higher level of professionalism by improving their skills and operating in a business-like manner."

Then there are more personal rewards like making friends, experiencing the joys of accomplishment and developing leadership qualities.

From a superintendents' viewpoint there are many advantages to having a mechanics' association. Williams, who holds a college degree, as do many of his peers, realizes his limitations when it comes to maintaining equipment.

"I need to have the best professional people working for me because I'm not strong in that area, to say the least," he said.

"The role of the mechanic has changed with the growing complexity of equipment. The 1980s saw more and more hydraulic and electronic equipment. We need educated, trained technicians to run them. Better-trained mechanics means less down time for equipment. Well-running equipment makes for a happy superintendent and a happy superintendent makes for a good working environment."

But having a mechanic who is active in an association comes at a cost to the superintendent — a direct cost in dues and educational expenses and a time cost when the mechanic is away at meetings and seminars. Since that time and money aren't available without the superintendent's blessing, there are things the mechanic can do to gain his boss' support:

• Give the superintendent plenty of notice for an upcoming meeting, explain what you expect to learn and report back on what you learned after the meeting. "That's what sells it to me. Any superintendent worth his weight will accept that and approve your going."

• Hold meetings at appropriate times. "For instance, an all-day meeting in mid-August would be a bad time in Chicago. Frankly, mechanics are just too valuable. We just can't afford to lose a mechanic for a whole day that time of year. December,

Continued on page 37

If These Nationals Climbed Hills any Better They'd Have Four Legs, Two Horns & Live in the Rockies!



See for yourself why there's nothing as nimble on any turf as a National Triplex. Call today for a FREE video.

(612) 646-4079



NATIONAL MOWER COMPANY

SINCE 1919

700 Raymond Avenue
St Paul, Minnesota 55114
FAX (612) 646-2887

Conference Report

Ground water studies positive for golf

BY PETER BLAIS

Those in the golf business tend to view the industry as very positive for the environment. Unfortunately many others don't see it that way, especially regarding ground water contamination by pesticides, according to Richard Cooper, Ph.D., a University of Massachusetts researcher who spoke at February's GCSAA annual conference in Orlando.

There have been 26 documented cases of pesticides found in ground water in New England, although none have been associated with golf courses, said Cooper.

But the average person doesn't distinguish between agricultural pesticides (the most common source of ground water contamination) and turf management pesticides used on golf courses. Increasingly it's the superintendent's job to serve as industry spokesman and explain those differences.

To help the superintendent better perform this new role, Cooper reviewed some of the basic facts about turfgrass and the results of recent studies regarding pesticide contamination.

Golf course turf provides a very dense plant population, between 1,500 and 2,000 plants per square foot in the rough rising to 3,500 to 4,000 on the green.

"Grass plants intercept most, if not all pesticides before they reach ground water. That's a very important difference compared to agricultural plants like corn, soybeans, etc.," Cooper said.

Thatch, the layer of decomposing matter below the growing grass, is a strong absorber of pesticides. Thatch is common under turf but not agricultural plants.

Grass also has a deep and extensive root system that can reach down several feet. Roots both absorb and adsorb pesticides.

"The nature of the turfgrass community is that it helps protect the environment," said Cooper. That's why the Soil Conservation Service has long recommended a grass buffer strip be planted near water supplies, he added.

Despite the environmental benefits of grass, there is still some

Mechanics

Continued from page 36

January or February would be fine."

- Discuss appropriate topics at appropriate places. "Someone once suggested having an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) representative come by. No superintendent was crazy about hosting a meeting that could uncover a violation and \$25,000 fine."

- Don't use meetings simply as a bitch session. "If you have problems, have a discussion. Try to do it in a positive manner."

- Don't discuss salaries at every meeting. "Schedule a meeting where salaries and benefits are the the topics. Everyone attending should be expected to verbally participate. That way you have the facts rather than rumor. Superintendents have been doing it for a long time."

pesticide movement. But many things combine to break down pesticides before they reach ground water, according to the UMass professor.

Volatilization — gaseous losses to the atmosphere — claim up to 15 percent of turfgrass pesticides, according to a GCSAA-sponsored UMass study.

Many fungicides and herbicides are designed to be absorbed by plants and are taken up almost completely. Adsorption to roots and minerals binds the rest to the soil and prevents them from reaching the water supply.

When pesticides do reach water

supplies, they get there in one of two ways — runoff or leaching.

Recent studies at Pennsylvania State University and the University of Rhode Island showed that runoff from turf is not a common event. It takes rain on the order of four to six inches per hour or frozen soil to get pesticide movement through runoff.

"But in the absence of unusual conditions, studies have shown runoff not to be a major avenue of pesticide movement," said Cooper.

Another URI study of 2,4-D and Dicamba placed on sandy soil showed that only one part per billion of 2,4-D leached through to

ground water, well below the federal standard of 100 parts per billion in drinking water. Dicamba showed up at only 1/2 part per billion, again well below the federal standard of 12-1/2 parts per billion.

"Clearly, even with over-application and over-irrigation, we never get close to what is considered a toxicologically significant amount, an amount that we'd start to worry about. Routine applications of 2,4-D and Dicamba do not contaminate ground water," said Cooper.

An Ohio State study by Dr. Harry Niemczyk showed that insecticides, one of the most toxic sub-

stances in the environment, can be recovered at rates of 88 to 99 percent four weeks after application.

A study on the sandy soils of Cape Cod also revealed that pesticides from golf courses rarely leach into ground water.

Cooper said he made a conscious effort not to pick studies that would benefit the golf industry.

"I've reviewed the literature and there are no documented cases of ground water pollution from pesticides to my knowledge," he said. "Instead of polluting the environment, we can make a strong case that golf courses protect the environment."

ACCLAIM® GIVES YOU 6 GOOD REASONS TO CHANGE YOUR CRABGRASS CONTROL HABIT:

1. BETTER CONTROL

ACCLAIM® 1EC Herbicide is a postemergence product that provides effective control of crabgrass and goosegrass without damaging desirable turf.

2. MORE FLEXIBILITY

ACCLAIM is the postemergence herbicide you can use anytime during the growing season whenever and wherever crabgrass and goosegrass emerge.

3. RESEEDING

ACCLAIM is the only postemergence crabgrass and goosegrass herbicide that can be used as labelled on newly reseeded or overseeded turf throughout the season.

4. BENTGRASS

Now use ACCLAIM for crabgrass control on bentgrass fairways and tees at the low 0.09 oz./1000 sq. ft. rate (about 15 cents) every 3-4 weeks as needed.

5. INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Since ACCLAIM is a truly effective postemergence product, you have the capability to control annual grasses only when they are a problem and only where control is needed.

6. LESS STORAGE

ACCLAIM is packaged in quart and gallon containers that store easily and require very little space.



SPECIAL OFFER

Now you can save even more by switching to ACCLAIM. Buy 3 gallons before March 16, and get 1 gallon free.

ACCLAIM®

TODAY'S BEST SOLUTION FOR CRABGRASS.

Read and follow label directions carefully. ACCLAIM is a registered trademark of Hoechst Celanese Corporation. The name and logo HOECHST are registered trademarks of Hoechst AG. The name and logo ROUSSEL are registered trademarks of Roussel Uclaf S.A.

Hoechst
Roussel