

Golf course show shaping up as 'extraordinary' event

This month's 61st International Golf Course Conference and Show (Feb. 19-26) in Orlando, Fla., is expected to shatter all previous attendance and revenue records, according to conference officials.

"Things are going extraordinarily well," said Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Communications Director Pat Jones. "We moved the GCSAA booth around and created another 30,000 square feet to accommodate the extra exhibitors. Registration is way up, especially for our members. We should have a rec-

ord number of superintendents here this year, which is why everyone else is showing up.

"Most of the educational sessions are sold out. The only thing that isn't is the golf tournament. We expanded to five courses this year and we're expecting about 530 golfers."

The show gives attendees the chance to build skills, expand knowledge and keep abreast of the latest in golf course products and services.

"That's why our members come," said Jones. "We hope they will get a very concerted educational opportunity that allows them to be better managers and superintendents. Education is always the emphasis. And this year there is more emphasis than ever on the environment."

The weeklong program kicks off Monday with the first of the one- and two-day seminars. These educational sessions, many of which have been sold out for months, run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and will be held every day through Thursday. All seminars, except the Certification Exam Study Guidelines, offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs).

The back-to-school nature of the conference continues Friday with three morning and three afternoon concurrent educational sessions. The morning sessions are entitled Critically Evaluating Your Needs, Golf Course Management Techniques: Part I and Managing Today's Environment. The afternoon sessions are Golf Course Management Techniques Part II, Southern Turfgrass Management and Water Quality and Distribution. Nationally known experts in those fields will speak every 20 minutes on their area of expertise.

The conference officially begins with Thursday night's opening session and reception at the Peabody Orlando Hotel. Noted author, speaker and business consultant Dr. Ken Blanchard will be the keynote speaker. His "One Minute Manager Library" has sold more than 7 million copies and been translated into more than 20 languages.

Blanchard's talk could help a superintendent gain the type of personal insight to make him a more effective manager. The same is true of Dr. Gayle Carson, a management consultant who presents proven methods for organizing time, and Joe Griffith, an experienced businessman who emphasizes practical communication skills. Carson and Griffith will speak Sunday from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

"Blanchard is a little new," said Jones. "He's a very effective speaker and a good teacher who doesn't bore you to death. In the past we've gone more for the entertainer at the opening session, rather than a person, like Blanchard, who can also help with self-improvement. He's a motivator and we hope he'll set the tone for the

conference."

Other informational programs include Saturday's international roundtable (11 a.m.) and a symposium on sand topdressing and Walt Disney World's commitment to professional horticulture (at 1 p.m. Saturday), and Sunday's government relations open forum (10 a.m.).

Both GCSAA President Dennis D. Lyon and his successor, Gerald Faubel, have stressed the importance of cooperation among the various professional associations that benefit from the golf industry. That's why representatives of other associations will be conducting programs at the superintendents' show.

The Golf Course Builders of America will present "The Golf Course Builders and Turf Management" Saturday from 1 to 4:30 p.m. The American Society of Golf Course Architects and several regional mechanics associations will conduct concurrent programs Sunday from 1 to 4:30 p.m. And the United States Golf Association Green Section Program runs from 8 a.m. to noon on Monday, the conference's final day.

"We approached them (GCSAA) about coming down," said Pat Ryan, vice president of the Chicagoland Golf Course Mechanics Association who is hoping superintendents will encourage their mechanics to form regional associations once they hear the benefits. "They thought it was a great idea. You just can't get an association going without the support of the superintendents."

Saturday morning is the start of the 2-1/2-day trade show with nearly 500 companies signed up to exhibit their products and services. The 350,000-square-foot trade show floor will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday.

"It's the major show for the turf industry," said Cushman national sales manager Dan Hedglin, whose company plans to have between 30 and 40 of its own employees plus another 150 dealers at the event. "It gives us the opportunity to visit with the final users of our products and lets us introduce many new products in one setting."

There will also be time for business, like Monday's (Feb. 26) GCSAA annual meeting which, among other things, will see the passing of the president's title from Lyon to Faubel.

Of course if there weren't some time for fun, no one would show up at these conferences. So, in addition to the mind-bending activities already mentioned there will also be the GCSAA Golf Championship on Feb. 19-20; a spouse/children program featuring organized activities and visits to nearby attractions; a merchandise booth where official GCSAA products will be available; and Monday night's concluding banquet and dancing to singer Tony Orlando.

Mechanics eye support to form nat'l association

Gone are days of the 'shade tree mechanic'

BY PETER BLAIS

Golf course mechanics are where superintendents were 40 years ago in terms of national organization. But they hope the first-ever mechanics session at this month's International Golf Course Conference and Show will help upgrade their professional standing.

There is no national mechanics organization like the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

There are a few regional mechanics groups nationwide, mostly concentrated in the Southeast, and several will combine to put on the 3 1/2-hour mechanics program scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, during the conference.

"There will be a lot of superintendents and mechanics there. We're hoping they'll see what we've accomplished and want to start similar organizations back home," said Pat Ryan, vice president of the Chicagoland Golf Course Mechanics Association.

Ryan, the head mechanic at Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, was one of a handful of charter members when the Chicagoland association was formed three years ago.

The group has since grown to almost 100 members.

It conducts monthly meetings at which many manufacturers have talked about their new products.

A December seminar attracted more than 300 people, including many superintendents. Superintendents have generally been very supportive of the association's efforts, Ryan said.

"How could they object to anything that helps the golf course industry and makes

their jobs easier?" he asked.

The association's primary mission is to share knowledge on the maintenance of new equipment. That knowledge has taken on increased importance in recent years with the fast-paced change in golf course maintenance technology.

Gone are the days of the "shade mechanic" who was sent out with a screwdriver and adjustable wrench to sit under a tree and tinker with a mower.

Today's mechanic is often responsible for \$500,000 to \$1 million worth of equipment, consisting of a variety of brand names including everything from a two-cycle weed wacker to a \$50,000 gang mower.

"Jacobsen runs workshops and Toro runs workshops and so do the others. But there's no school where you can go and learn how to take care of all types of equipment. So it's important to share knowledge. An association allows that. It's worked real well on the local level," said Ryan.

"It's like the corner garage that you were able to take your car to 20 years ago," Ryan said. "Those guys have all but disappeared as cars have gotten a lot more complicated. Now if you just want a tune-up, you have to take it to a special tune-up shop."

"It's the same way with golf course mechanics. Hydraulic equipment and mowers that cut down to the thousandth-of-an-inch were unheard of 20 years ago. Now they're everywhere. And if you have no education on how to maintain those machines, then you need one in a big hurry."

In fact, it's the relatively inexperienced novice mechanic trying to upgrade his education who may benefit most from an association, according to Ryan.

"We're really trying to reach out to the new guys," he said.

Featured speakers



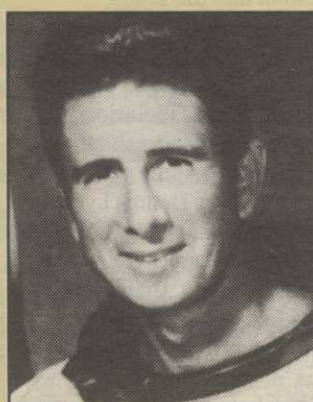
Dr. Ken Blanchard



Joe Griffith



Dr. Gayle Carson



James Irwin

Busy program prepared for spouses, children

The Orlando Spouse/Children Program boasts an expanded schedule plus a new concept: Optional Activities.

The Basic Program offers minimal organized activities at a minimal cost. Optional Activities offer a "pay more, get more" program for

the entire family.

Some of the offerings include a continental breakfast, trips to Cypress Gardens, Sea World, shopping in Winter Park, Kennedy Space Center, champagne brunch cruise and an arts and crafts exhibit.