

Aerial shot of Orlando, site of the International Conference and Show.

Orlando: More than booths and classrooms

By MIKE JAMISON

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Conference & Show has an impressive lineup of workshops and seminars, and an expo full of exciting new companies and established successful businesses.

But even the most dedicated of attendees can spend only so much time increasing knowledge, sharpening job skills and gathering informa-

tion on new products and services.

Then there must be time for fun, especially in Orlando, the world's No. 1 vacation destination.

The entire world knows about "the worlds" — Disney World, Sea World and all the other major attractions in the area. And they are certainly worth consideration when deciding how to spend your free time.

But there are other, less-traveled places to visit and interesting things to do.

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Past presidents offer insights, advice

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — When incoming President Dave Fearis picks up the gavel for the first time at February's International Conference and Show in Orlando, he will be following in the footsteps of 62 other men who have led the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America to the prominent position the association enjoys today.

The golf industry has changed dramatically since Colonel John Morley was voted the association's first president back in 1926. The men who have followed him have been in a unique position to observe the changes in the golf industry.

We contacted as many of the GCSAA's former and soon-to-be-former presidents as possible and asked them two questions:

- What is the biggest change you've observed in the golf industry during your career?

- What single piece of advice would you give to incoming President Fearis?

Following are their responses:

George Renault — 1998 — Director of golf and grounds, Eagle's Creek Country Club, Naples, Fla.

Biggest change. "The effort to increase awareness of what the superintendent does within the industry and with the golfing populace. We have a lot more

work to do. It's understood at the better clubs. Everyone's got to sell themselves and we're trying to give them the tools to do it."

Advice for Dave. "Just be yourself and let your instincts guide you. Don't read too much into anything."

Paul McGinnis — 1997 — Head superintendent, Alta Mesa Country Club, Mesa, Ariz.

Biggest change. "In my 25 years, the No. 1 thing is the increase in the demand for quality at golf courses. Superintendents

are held to such a high standard that they are expected to maintain day in and day out. One of my first clubs was a 54-hole complex where we were mowing tees at 1 inch, fairways at 1-1/4 inches because

the ryegrass looked good. We weren't concerned as much about playability or what the golfer thought. Now that's completely reversed where sometimes we force mowing heights down because of what the golfer expects day in and day out."

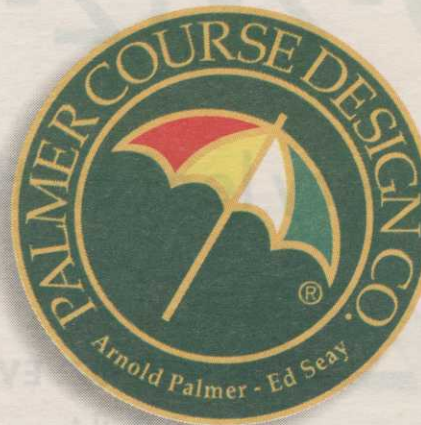
Advice for Dave. "Enjoy the ride and hold on tight. He's going to be so busy."

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Paul McGinnis

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Touring Orlando

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- There are numerous themed dinner shows throughout the tourist area. You can see horses prance, knights fence, magicians disappear and Miss Kitty's girls dance while you chow down on the house specialty. The locals' favorite is Sleuth's Mystery Dinner Theater, where you are asked to solve a mystery that is played out before you while you enjoy a four-course meal.

- Themed restaurants abound as well. You can dine with the stars at Planet Hollywood, the jocks at All-Star Cafe, the rock stars at Hard Rock, or my personal favorite, the good ol' boys at Race Rock right there on International Drive.

If you would rather escape the tourist dining for a night, try these local favorites: a delicious steak with a great view at Houston's in Winter Park or one of the unique dishes at Bistro Cappuccino in Lake Mary.

Another favorite restaurant for locals is Pebbles. One location is at Church Street, which offers plenty of night life after the food is served.

- Pointe Orlando has everything going for it, including location. It is just across and down the street from the Convention Center, and if eating, drinking, dancing, shopping and mingling are in your plans, you need look no further.

- If you are looking for elbow-to-elbow socializing in a lively, loud and singles sort of atmosphere, try Bahama Breeze on International Drive. You'll get plenty of all of the above, and it also serves decent food.

- Care to see just how big of an effect a six-month lockout can have on the best athletes in the world? Attend an Orlando Magic basketball game and see just how low the NBA can go. As a goodwill offering to disgruntled fans, each team is selling 500 tickets per game for \$10 each. Better seats are available at higher prices. Games are played in the Orlando Arena downtown, and usually begin at 7:40 p.m. Could be good for laughs, if nothing more.

- Many of you are coming from cities that have International Hockey League teams. Orlando is no different. The Orlando Solar Bears play an exciting, fast-paced style, and are always in contention in the Eastern Conference. Tickets start at \$6 and are easy to come by. The Solar Bears also play in the Orlando Arena.

- Packing your sticks for the trip? Getting a tee time in Central Florida can be difficult in mid-winter, as "snowbirds" and northern vacationers crowd the courses.

That chore is made easier, however, by Greater Orlando Golf Destinations (GOGD). Several of the area's leading golf courses formed GOGD to enhance Orlando's reputation

Getting a tee time in Central Florida can be difficult in mid-winter

as a golf destination and to offer one-stop shopping for tee times and golf vacations.

The work of many of the game's leading architects can be found among the GOGD 14, including Tom Fazio, Rees Jones, Ron Garl, P.B. Dye,

Bobby Weed and Joe Lee. For rate and course information, or to make a tee time, call 407-330-2355.

The courses include Black Bear, Deer Island, Falcon's Fire, Forest Lake, Kissimmee Bay, Legacy Club at Alaquia Lakes,

Metro West, Poinciana, Remington, Ridgewood Lakes, Rock Springs Ridge, Southern Dunes, Timacuan and Wekiva.

Orlando, Fla., didn't earn the title of world's No. 1 vacation destination on marketing hype and awesome weather alone. There is a lot to do here, folks. And variety galore. Just make sure you set aside enough free time to enjoy some of it.

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