

From THE FEED



GIS 2013 is in the books, but that doesn't mean we're done talking about it online. We heard from plenty of our friends at the show itself and after – and that's not even counting the GCI TweetUp, with our own social media awards. Here are some of our favorite tweets from the show!



Nadeem Zreikat
@campbellturf
I'm with Pat



Dave Wilbur @TurfgrassZealot

RT if you think @GCImagazine looked good in Pink today.



Andrew Hardy @pheasantturf

@Aquatrols Pounding beers at your booth yesterday. Thank you and thanks for hosting #GCITweetUp13 #kickedoutofthetradeshow.



Aquatrols @aquatrols

The turnout for #GCItweetup13 was so big that Pat had to switch to a mic. RIP red bull horn!



Ryan Howard @TWRyanHoward

when they come up with a "best blog yet to be started" award my work will be recognized.



Greg Shaffer @gtshaffer

Another #LSOT victory. @pheasantturf wins best blog award at @gcimagazine tweetup. #theaward.



Bill Brown @iTurfapps

Thank you! Big honor following the Dr. Team effort with @hiawathaturf and @URITurf.



Join the conversation
on Twitter @GCIMagazine!



Bringing home a win... for a good cause

To end GIS on a "good" note, members of the golf turf media battled it out in a round of "Superintendent Pyramid: Media for Charity" on Thursday, Feb. 7 at the Golf Industry Show in San Diego. The competition was put on and held at the BASF booth. Two team members from five publications; Superintendent, Golfdom, Golf Course Management, TurfNet and our own Golf Course Industry; picked one of six categories offered in BASF's pyramid. They were then given 30 seconds for one teammate to describe a word to the other teammate, similar to the game Catchphrase.

When the dust settled, GCI's Kyle Brown and Heather Tunstall came out on top yet again, going six for six and winning \$2,000 for the USO. Golf Course Management and TurfNet each won \$1,750 for the charities Wee One Foundation and Chopin Hall respectively. Superintendent magazine won \$1,350 for Brother's Brother Foundation and Golfdom won \$1,100 for Disabled American Veterans. Overall, BASF donated \$7,950 to various charities.



Making the move



A big "Attaboy!" goes out to Nate Jordan, who recently informed us that he's been hired as superintendent of Saratoga Lake Golf Club in upstate New York.

You may remember Jordan as one of the assistant superintendents GCI profiled in November's cover story "The Waiting Game." The feature examined assistants' struggles and frustrations vying for superintendent jobs in a recovering economy and beleaguered industry market.

Jordan, who is also a regular contributor to GCI, previously worked as an assistant at Mt. Hawley Country Club in Peoria, Ill.

Enter bit.ly/127MHAC into your web browser to read "The Waiting Game."



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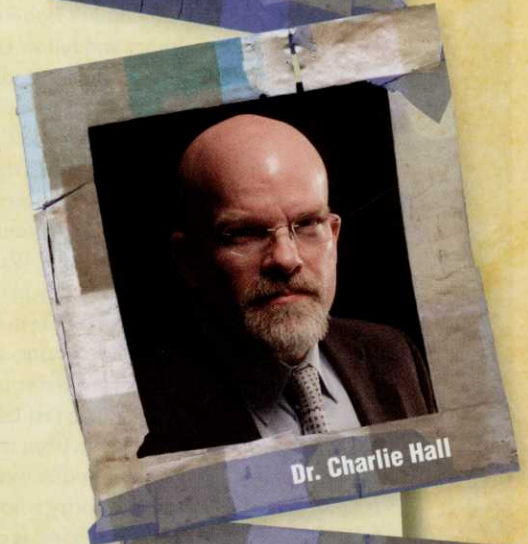
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- **Expand Your Expertise** – Educate yourself and your employees to turn your garden center into a one-stop, problem-solving shop for customers.
- **Differentiate or Die** – Stand out from the rest and thrive in the green industry by giving your customers a unique and personalized experience.
- **Join the Revolution** – Connect and collaborate with other independents to strengthen both your IGC and the industry as a whole.



Michael V. Geary



Dr. Charlie Hall



Sid Raisch

Visit www.BloomaPalooza.com
for a list of speakers and session descriptions.



Brian Vinchesi, the 2009 EPA WaterSense Irrigation Partner of the Year, is president of Irrigation Consulting Inc., a golf course irrigation design and consulting firm headquartered in Pepperell, Mass., that designs irrigation systems throughout the world. He can be reached at bvinchesi@irrigationconsulting.com or 978/433-8972.

FROM THE SHOW FLOOR

Another Golf Industry Show – where all the new products, industry issues and hot topics were on display for all to see – has come and gone. From an irrigation standpoint, though, it certainly was not very exciting.

Water was a hot topic once again at the conference, with some 23 water-related talks, seminars, panels or presentations. Many of these were presented at the Design and Construction Solutions Center sponsored by the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) and the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA). Pinehurst's Bob Farren and golf course architect and fellow GCI columnist Jeff Bauer discussed "More Heads, Less Water? Or Fewer Heads, Lower Budget?" This presentation centered on Pinehurst No. 2's renovation and conversion to single-row irrigation.

There were two very interesting panel discussions regarding water presented by GCSAA. On Monday, "Got Water? Water availability, reductions and efficiency in the golf industry" was moderated by Greg Lyman; GCSAA's director of environmental programs, and discussed the availability aspects of water for golf. The session included an update on last fall's USGA's Water Summit and speakers from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the Southern Nevada Water Authority who discussed their golf course water-use policies. It concluded with a presentation from Toro on how technology can reduce water use. The discussion's basic conclusion: since all water issues are local, the solution must be local. So GCSAA members need to get involved locally to ensure they will have water.

On Tuesday, "Politics of Water: Golf industry engagement leads to practical public policy" looked at the regulatory side. These presentations and panel featured speakers from Texas, Conn. and Southern Calif. about how their associations got involved and shaped and/or changed regulations that were affecting golf course water use in their region or state. These presentations should

be viewable on the GCSAA website.

On the show floor, both Rain Bird and Toro prominently displayed soil sensing, which is becoming popular with superintendents. Along with interactive booth displays, several talks focused on soil sensing's benefits.

The biggest irrigation news was Hunter's unveiling of its new golf course irrigation products. This includes what is now a complete line of Totally Top Serviceable valve-in-head sprinklers and the addition of a part/full sprinkler in one which

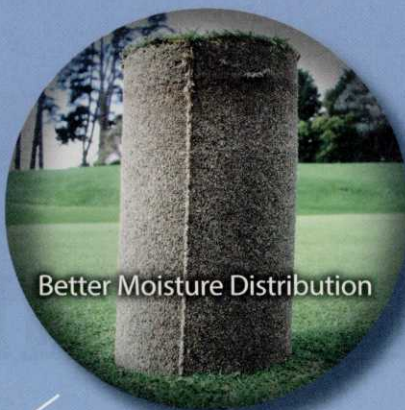
The maximum count on the new controller is 80 stations. It seems that station count keeps growing with every new manufacturer's controller introduction.

is now the industry norm. Hunter introduced their new Pilot control system, which includes completely new central control software on a new platform and its associated field controller or decoder system. The maximum count on the new controller is 80 stations. It seems station count keeps growing with every new manufacturer's controller introduction. As part of the product roll out, Hunter has enhanced its distribution network to sell and service its golf products.

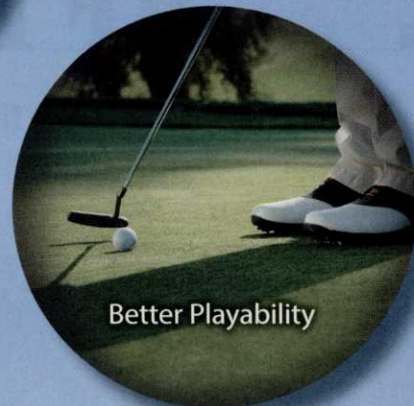
Not exactly irrigation related, but generating buzz was the concept of ultrasonic algae control. These ultrasonic sound waves vibrate through the water, causing the vacuoles inside the algae cells to resonate and break, which over time damages the algae and causes it to die. If you are having trouble managing your irrigation or other ponds, this might be something to try.

While 2013 GIS was nothing special from an irrigation standpoint, it did reiterate water's importance to the industry and that water issues are not going away. **GCI**

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AFTER THE FIRE

In 2011, fire consumed FarmLinks maintenance facility.
The hard lessons they learned to build it back.



by Trent Bouts

In the two years since fire razed his headquarters at FarmLinks Golf Club at Pursell Farms in Sylacauga, Ala., golf course superintendent Mark Langner still gets “burned” now and then. Most recently, he was about to dispatch a crew for some tree work when it dawned on him that a critical safety harness had gone up in the blaze. That \$200 to \$300 harness was just one more “little thing” Langner had omitted to claim on insurance. Buying a replacement now meant another nick in the current budget, not to mention delays on the tree project.

“Oh golly, I can’t begin to tell you the number of little things, little trinket pieces of equipment, that you might only use once or twice a year that you forget you had in the building,” Langner says. Can’t begin to tell ... that’s no mere figure of speech. By his own admission, Langner’s record keeping was incomplete and what he had was fragmented. Of course, even some of what he did have went up in smoke.

In the end, insurers honored more than \$3 million in claims but the payout would and should have been more had Langner known exactly what equipment was lost and what it was worth at the time. Instead, he and his team poured countless hours over weeks and months into pulling together as many pieces of the puzzle as they could find or recreate from vendor records. That sleuthing itself was costly in terms of man-hours and as just as significantly as Langner says, “It takes you away from what you’re supposed to be doing.”

At this point in the story, most, if not the vast majority, of superintendents should be shifting a little uneasily in their seats. If not, then try this brief exercise Langner recommends: “Just sit for a few minutes and consider where you would be, and where your facility would be, if you suddenly lost everything on your computer, on your bookshelf, in your entire building?”



Construction of the new maintenance facility at FarmLinks Golf Club at Pursell Farms in Sylacauga, Ala.

Check out the iPhone/iPad app to watch amateur video of fire consuming the FarmLinks maintenance facility. Or, enter bit.ly/WwdaAY into your web browser to access the same video online.



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COVER STORY



The frame of the new maintenance facility as it was under construction.

Poof!

Gone! It wouldn't have to be fire. It could be a tornado, flood, landslide, earthquake. It could be who knows what, or when. "If you lost it all, what's your plan?" Langner asks. "What's your path for going forward?" Two years out from the fire, he is in a position to offer some recommendations.

It is important to note here that Langner is anything but some novice who has been caught out by his own inexperience. On the contrary, he has more than 20 years in the industry under his belt and carries the formal designation of director of agronomy and applied research at FarmLinks, which remains one of the most forward-thinking facilities in the country. There he manages 10 varieties of turf across 600 acres that provide resort level golf as well as a real-world R&D laboratory. As part of his role he hosts more than 600 superintendents from across the country every year. It is not a job for the timid or the untalented.

For good measure, it's also worth noting that Langner hosted the Alabama State Amateur Championship at FarmLinks just three months after the fire. Reviews from players and officials were uniformly glowing.

Broadly, Langner's recommendations to colleagues go like this: take a complete inventory, make sure your insurance covers what you think it does, maintain a thorough back up of your records and keep it off site, then devise an emergency response plan. On its face, that list seems like simple common sense, because it is.

But as Langner and any other superintendent who makes it through his or her first 24 hours understands, stuff comes up. Schedules and priority lists become what you try and take care of between the unexpected. So while everyone likely appreciates that everything on Langner's list of recommendations is crucial, they could probably rattle off a longer list of more urgent concerns without a second's thought. Until, as was the case at FarmLinks, lightning strikes. Then it's way too late.



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Demolition of the FarmLinks maintenance facility following the 2011 fire. (Inset) the damage done by the fire, which started in the early morning.

Inventory

In terms of knowing what he had, and proof that he had it, he was in “pretty good shape with the big ticket items,” Langner says. But from there the paper trail – whether physical or virtual – frayed and faded to varying degrees. His tip for a quick fix is to walk the entire maintenance facility with a video camera, or these days even a cell phone, filming every inch, high and low. Ironically, Langner remembers his father doing just that at the family home “when VHS first came out” decades earlier and he had even done it at his own home, but never at the golf course.

“That will give you a quick record and it’s something you can do once a year to stay up to date,” he says. “But the best investment is in a good inventory management system.” By chance, Langner had purchased just such a system shortly before the fire but had only just started loading data. You can bet that system is now full of all the new equipment that has rolled in since March, 2011.

A crude but effective alternative could be a scanner which Langner points out can be bought for “\$100 or less” allowing for anything in print to be digitized. At FarmLinks that could have preserved all kinds of data such as soil and tissue test outcomes not to mention decades of research at the property. “I think that’s the thing that pains me most is losing a lot of that research that was all on paper,” Langner says.

The costs incurred as a result of incomplete records went beyond a shortfall in the insurance claim. “It has created all kinds of inefficiencies because we did not have the tools when we needed them or the data or the knowledge to use in our decision-making,” Langner says. “It’s hard to put a value on that but you can bet it’s been significant. It absolutely sets us back and I wouldn’t say we have fully recovered yet.”



Insurance

Having insurance is one thing, but having the right insurance is another thing altogether. Superintendents should make a point of sitting down with their general manager, chief financial officer or comptroller with a copy of their existing policy in front of them, Langner says.

“A lot of times policies are entered into by someone who may not really understand the extent of what needs to be covered and what replacement values are involved,” he says. “Being underinsured can be very detrimental to a property.”

Again, Langner admits those were conversations he didn’t have prior to the fire although he has had “a lot” since. “Take the cost of a Triplex, or a sprayer, or a fairway unit,” he says. “Those are items that have increased significantly in cost over the last five years or so. If you find you’re \$10,000 or \$15,000 short on coverage then you’ve got to find that money or get yourself replacement equipment that is older or maybe not of the same quality.”

It’s not only equipment prices and values that change. Langner notes that the myriad codes and regulations golf course maintenance operations are subject to can also be moving targets. Setting up a new facility to current standards may require a lot more than those that were in place when a policy was written.

Back-up

It could have been worse. Langner had his entire OSMAC SitePro irrigation program backed-up on a thumb-drive and stored outside the maintenance building. Newer systems provide automatic back-up off-site. But few superintendents have an office outside the maintenance facility like Langner does at FarmLinks. The point being that even if there is a thumb-drive, or any backed-up materials, it must be kept elsewhere to be of any value.

All of Langner’s “as built” records were destroyed in the fire, irrigation, drainage, you name it. That’s like the 21st-century equivalent of losing the career assistant who was there when the course was built in 1975 and can remember where all sorts of things are under the surface. That’s a kind of institutional knowledge that can be immensely valuable ... when you have it. Imagine starting the whole budget process without last year’s spreadsheet to work from, let alone a long-term record.

An event doesn’t necessarily have to be catastrophic in nature like a fire or a tornado to be extremely damaging, Langner points out. A simple, and far more common, computer crash can be extremely problematic if that computer was sole repository for the information it held. Fully-automated back-up services abound today and some are even free.

