

Good SHOWING

Despite being moved from city to city to city, the Golf Industry Show proved triumphant in Atlanta

BY THE GOLFDOM STAFF



Hey, Steve Mona and Mike Hughes, take a bow. You guys — and everybody else associated with staging the Golf Industry Show this year, including the Golf Course Builders Association of America and the American Society of Golf Course Architects — pulled it off. It was a wonderful show, held under difficult circumstances, having been moved from New Orleans to Houston to Atlanta.

There was a lot of news at the show, but perhaps the biggest news of all was the positive buzz about the event, held at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta in February. If there were complaints, they were from the people who always find something to complain about.

We think that Joe Hubbard, certified superintendent of the Broken Sound

Club in Boca Raton, Fla., and a gentleman known for his glass-is-half-full approach, summed up the 2006 GIS the best.

“Was Atlanta New Orleans? No! However, they did an exceptional job of making it all work out, and I was surprised,” Hubbard said. “There were only a few complaints from a few vendors or superintendents other than the cold

weather, but that is no different from a private club membership. I will say one thing that was the best thing Atlanta had going for it — courtesy. You will not find friendlier folks in the country. Even their homeless people on the streets were polite and smiling, with ingenious ways of asking for a little help. For manners, I will give up a few bucks any day!”

Now, on to the show's highlights, of which there were many:

Mike Hughes (left) and Steve Mona pose with a poster of the January *Golfdom* cover that features their likenesses. Hughes, executive director of the National Golf Course Owners Association, and Mona, CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, stopped by the *Golfdom* booth during the Golf Industry Show to sign the poster. It's currently selling on E-Bay for ...



Venturi makes 'em laugh, cry

Ken Venturi, the 1964 U.S. Open champion and retired CBS Sports commentator, gave about 1,600 individuals, mostly superintendents, everything they might have expected from a keynote speaker at Syngenta Professional Products' Green-Carpet Premiere held at the Georgia Aquarium during the show. Combining humorous anecdotes from his noteworthy careers with some heartfelt appreciation at being able to experience such a wonderful life, Venturi, 75, was visibly emotional by the end of his hour-long speech.

He spoke of the greatest sporting event he has seen — not a golf tournament that he had played in or covered but a 100-yard dash at the Special Olympics.

"A young man fell down halfway to the finish line, and his two friends looked back and saw him lying on the ground," Venturi said. "They stopped and they went back and

knees. Particularly funny were some of the Yogi Berra-like comments he had heard while working 33 years for CBS:

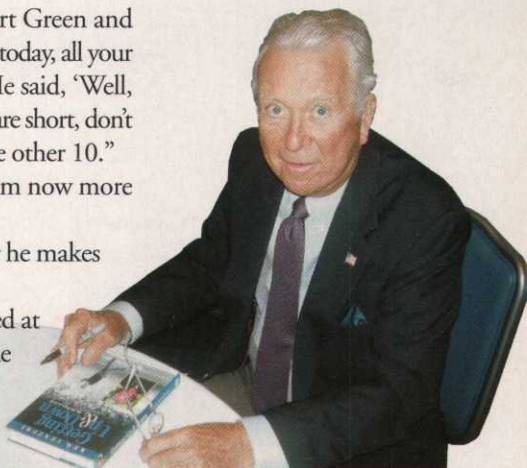
■ "They asked George Archer once, what would you do if there wasn't golf. He said, 'I'd probably be a caddie.'"

■ "I was interviewing Hubert Green and said, 'Hubert, you were very bold today, all your putts were beyond the green.' He said, 'Well, Ken, 90 percent of the putts that are short, don't go in.' I didn't ask him about the other 10."

■ "Well, a birdie will help him now more than a bogie."

■ "A lot depends on whether he makes it or misses."

Venturi's favorite line occurred at Augusta National. Referring to the swirling winds of Amen Corner, he said, "I have never seen the winds switching so many



"I wish my gallery was this big when I was playing."

— **Ken Venturi**, famed golfer and golf announcer, upon sizing up the crowd before his presentation at the Syngenta Professional Products Green Carpet Premiere event during the Golf Industry Show.

picked him up, and the three of them crossed the finish line together. I never saw or heard such an ovation in my life."

Moments later the Korean War veteran got misty-eyed while living up to a long-held promise that he had made to himself following that Special Olympics race. Devoted to giving of himself, he thanked the U.S. troops serving in Iraq.

"We're all here for one reason, and if it wasn't for our troops overseas, we wouldn't have these days," he said. "I'm honored to be an American."

The crowd — mesmerized from the get-go by the soft-spoken but poignant Venturi — responded with a reception-ending standing ovation.

Only moments earlier, Venturi, the 1998 recipient of the Old Tom Morris Award, had the audience slapping its

ways." He asked his director, "Mainly, which way is the wind coming from?" After a long pause, the director said, "Close as I can guess, it's coming from the player's rear."

Like his speech, Venturi's career was mixed with joy and sorrow; his stint on the professional tour, while stellar, lasted only 11 1/2 years because of a severe case of carpal tunnel syndrome.

As a youngster, he suffered from a stammering problem. One of his teachers told his mother that he would never be able to speak because of the condition. Venturi's mother asked her son what he was going to do about it.

"I said I was going to take the loneliest sport I know and take up golf. I picked up my set of clubs and ran across the street and hit my first golf balls at Harding Park," Venturi said. "I told my dad I wanted to be somebody. He said, 'Son, I'll always pray you'll be some-

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"I'm very proud of our graduates and the jobs they've done."

— **Joe Duich**, recipient of this year's Old Tom Morris Award, on teaching turfgrass at Penn State University for 36 years.

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body. I'll pray even more that you never forget where you came from.'"

Venturi never did. Following one of his early victories, he returned to Harding Park and treated the long-time caddies to Dom Perignon — and buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Venturi spoke often about his dad. At one point early in his career, Venturi sat at the dinner table bragging about how he had already won a few tournaments.

"I'm telling my dad how good I was and how I was the best," Venturi said. "He said, 'Are you through, son?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Son, let me tell you something. When you're as good as you are, you could tell everybody. When you get really good, they will tell you.' I think that was the last time I ever told anybody I was any good."

The biggest setback in Venturi's life was the bout with carpal tunnel syndrome that forced him to retire at 33. At one point, a doctor said surgery might lead to Venturi losing the tips of three fingers on his right hand. Venturi was devastated, knowing he might never again play golf.

Looking for strength, he turned to the man who had always kept him humble — his dad.

He said, 'Son, it doesn't make any difference if you ever play golf again,' " Venturi said. "I said, 'How could you say that, dad?' He said, 'Because, son, you were the best I ever saw.'"

Venturi went back to the doctor and said, "Doc, do whatever you have to do. My dad told me I was good."

Everyone inside the Georgia Aquarium would attest to that.

Long time comin'

Joe Duich is not the biggest name to ever win the Old Tom Morris Award. But he's one of the most deserving. What "Dr. Duich" has done for the game of golf and golf course maintenance is unprecedented.

Actually, it's about time that Duich, who spent 36 years teaching turfgrass classes at Penn State University (that's roughly 6,000 students, folks), won the award, the most prestigious prize given by the GCSAA.

You think bentgrass, you think Duich, well known for his research as much as his teaching. Thanks to the professor emeritus at Penn State, the industry has Penncross, Pennlinks and the Penn A's and G's for which to thank him. Did you know that most every golfer of the past 50 years has come in contact with Duich's work, mostly on greens? Turf students at Penn State hold Duich in a higher regard than another famous Joe at Penn State, as in Paterno.

Upon receiving the award, Duich didn't go on and on about his career. He talked about everybody else, mainly his mentors, more than himself. But he did say, "I'm proud to be the first person from academia to receive this award."

In his humble speech, Duich talked about his students, including the 2,000 of them who have gone on to manage golf courses.

"I'm very proud of our graduates and the jobs they've done," Duich said. "And not only the guys who hit the big time."

He also thanked his spouse.

"I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the support of my wife Pat for the past 52 years," Duich said.

And then he left the podium quickly and without much ado. Duich may not have the big name, but he has made a huge contribution to the industry — arguably bigger than any other Tom Morris award winner before him.

Here comes John Deere Golf Irrigation

That sound you hear of spraying water is John Deere Golf Irrigation. At the show, John Deere Golf & Turf One Source announced it was aligning with Signature Control Systems to roll out a full line of heads, valves, and control, sensing and communications systems this spring. Deere's announcement was big news.

"We wanted this to be the talk of the show," said Gregg Breningmeyer, director of sales and marketing for John Deere Golf & Turf One Source.

Deere said it has entered into an exclusive strategic alliance with Irvine, Calif.-based Signature to jointly research, create and distribute water management products and solutions for the golf market. Breningmeyer said Deere joined the irrigation segment "because our customers asked us to."

"I think a lot of our customers are looking for an alternative," Breningmeyer said.

Breningmeyer also emphasized that Deere wants to be more than just a supplier of irrigation products. He said the company wants to be involved in water management issues, such as consumption, hydrology and water quality.

"There's nothing compelling about telling people to come and do business with us because we have controllers and heads, particularly if they're not dissat-

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ified with the other two major players in the irrigation business," he said. "What is important to us is to be part of a bigger picture that we see in the 21st century, and that's around all the aspects of water management."

When told that a competitor believed Deere's foray into irrigation was nothing more than a private label venture, Brenningmeyer smiled and said he was delighted to hear that.

"We know our competitors will call it a brand play," he said. "That's fine. But we know what we're doing."

When Deere rolled out its Golf & Turf One Source a few years ago, the company said it was

Down and dirty

"You don't want your soil to be a limiting factor in producing good turf," Dr. Paul Rieke, professor emeritus at Michigan State University, told superintendents at an intensive two-day seminar, which dealt with everything from the basics of soil particle size to specific problems caused by a soil out of balance. Rieke taught the session in conjunction with Dr. Robert Carrow of the University of Georgia.

"Water management is basic to soils," Rieke said. "It is one of the most difficult areas to handle. There is a thin edge between not enough water and too much water." The latter leads to problems like compaction, leaching and runoff, he added.

The key to success, the professors agreed, was developing an overall management program that does not just deal with obvious issues like topdressing and cultivation.

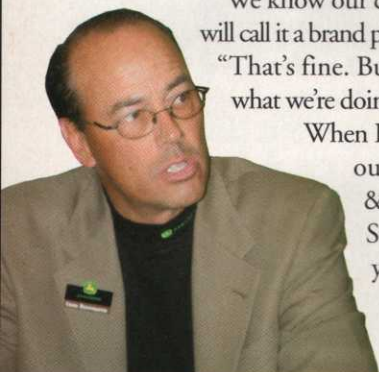
"You need to meld everything to-

a routine part of our language," Greg Lyman, GCSAA's director of environmental programs, predicted at a seminar on environmental management. He was joined by Marc McMullen of the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program at the daylong seminar.

"Everyone has to take a fresh look at their facility from a birds'-eye view and assess environmental risks at their golf courses," McMullen said. The key is to have a plan in place for almost any eventuality.

Most superintendents are aware of potential environmental problems caused by irrigation water runoff or fertilizer leaching. But how many are on top of issues like parts washers, lighting and the paints they use?

"Maybe it's time to look into more environmentally friendly products at the maintenance facility," McMullen suggested. "Then, don't implement them only at the maintenance facility but also in the club house and the pro shop."



"We know our competitors will call it a brand play."

— Gregg Brenningmeyer, director of sales and marketing, John Deere Golf & Turf One Source, on the company's venture into irrigation.

teaming with a cornucopia of golf course suppliers from various industry segments, including Hunter, to provide "a full-service platform that brings together a variety of products and services to better serve the expanding needs of superintendents." So what will happen to Hunter?

Brenningmeyer said Deere decided to align with Signature, which recently acquired Bear Irrigation, to give distributors more access to irrigation products nationally and abroad. That's something Deere couldn't do with Hunter, Brenningmeyer said, noting that all 44 North American One Source distributors will now be able to provide a full range of irrigation products.

gether," Rieke said, adding that a good program will utilize all appropriate methods. The key, however, is knowing what the problem is ... and the answer sometimes is not as obvious as it might seem.

"Identify the problem first, and then decide on a course of action," they advised, adding that the problems will be different from course to course and even from tee boxes to greens on the same course.

Another type of EMS

Don't call the ambulance. But for superintendents across the country, there is an EMS in their future.

"In five years, the term EMS (environmental management system) will be

Salute to Seay

Kudos to the Golf Course Builders Association of America for selecting Ed Seay as its 2006 Don A. Rossi Award winner. Seay, design partner of Arnold Palmer and president of Palmer Course Design Co., is one of the nicest guys in the business. "It was a privilege for me to present the award to Ed," said Landscapes Unlimited LLC Chief Executive Officer Bill Kubly, who has worked with Seay on nearly 20 projects. "He could have asked anyone, and I was honored he selected me." ■

Larry Aylward, Thomas Skernivitz and Curt Harler contributed to this report.