

I haven't been going to "the show" for as long as some of you veterans, but I've been going long enough to learn the difference between a good show and a bad show. Let's put it this way: A bad show moves slow, like a hacker with bad etiquette. A good show moves swiftly, like a group of "ready" golfers who finish their rounds in about four hours.

Atlanta had the makings of a bad show. First, it was a substitute city for New Orleans and Houston. Second, a lot of people just seem to be down on the Phoenix City.

But — and you could say it was against all odds — the show was nothing short of terrific. And it was that way because of the people who helped stage it.

When you stop and think about it, it's not the city or the weather or the sights that make a memorable show. Yeah, those things help, but ultimately it's the people who make a show noteworthy.

And the people I'll remember most about the 2006 Golf Industry Show are the ones who exhibited a Book of Job-like humility as they took their turns in the spotlight for their respective honors. Their graciousness was inspiring.

First, there was Ken Venturi, who gave a hang-on-every-word speech at the Georgia Aquarium as the star of Syngenta Professional Products' GreenCarpet Premiere. The 75-year-old Venturi, known as much for his stellar golf commentary on CBS as for his fine play, gave the sport 60 years of his life. But it was his gratefulness for what the sport gave him that came shining through in his speech.

Get this: Venturi's total winnings in 1958, his best year on the tour, totaled \$49,000. That translates ... gulp ... into about \$7 million today. But Venturi isn't gulping.

"I know they make a lot of money now, but I wouldn't trade my era and the people I've known," Venturi said. "If I had to choose to be anybody, I would choose to be me."

Two other individuals honored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) also appeared more obliged than proud upon receiving their awards during the show's opening session.

Here's to a Fine and Humble Show

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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Dr. Joe Duich, who finally received the GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award after all these years, talked about everybody but himself during his acceptance speech, including the 2,000 or so students he taught who have gone on to manage golf courses. The Penn State turfgrass legend is as deserving of the Old Tom Morris Award as anybody who has won it in the past.

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

Stan Zontek, director of the United States Golf Association's (USGA) Mid-Atlantic Region, received one of GCSAA's Distinguished Service Awards. But the appreciative Zontek said he would never have made it without a lot of help from his friends, not to mention a little luck.

"I want to thank the USGA for taking a chance on me 35 years ago," Zontek said. "There were times I may not have been the perfect employee."

And, finally, there was the humble Texan, Joe Anderson, the superintendent of Center Country Club who won the GCSAA's 2006 National Championship & Golf Classic. Upon accepting his shiny trophy for his victory, Anderson didn't talk about a mean short game or an uncanny ability to hit fairways and greens. He took the high road and thanked the GCSAA for giving him one fun ride.

"It's been a wonderful experience," Anderson said softly. "Thank you very much."

In a world full of legends in their own minds, it was nice to see modesty on stage at the Golf Industry Show.

Thanks for the memories, gentlemen.

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