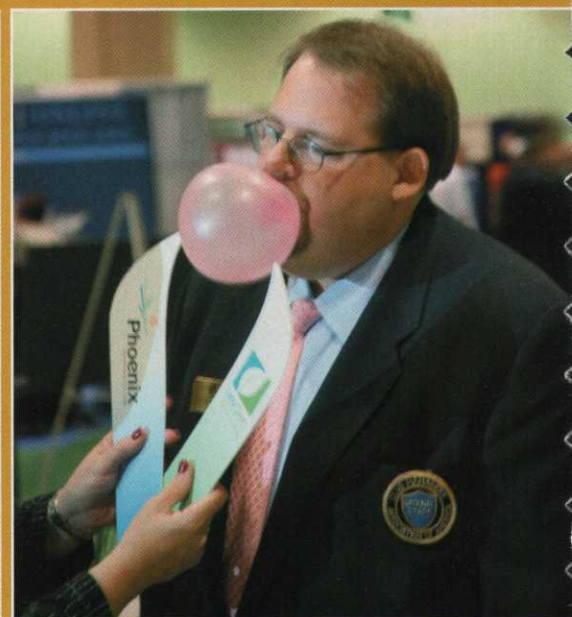


▼ Good



Show-ing

BY LARRY AYLWARD, DAVID FRABOTTA, CURT HARLER AND MARTY WHITFORD

You put a lot of miles on your feet, but hey it's the **Golf Industry Show!**
Here's a recap of what went on in Orlando

◀ CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

A showgoer checks out a concept golf car at the Club Car booth; Tom Hill from BASF hosts Turf Jeopardy at the BASF booth; Christian Tom, manager of career seminars for the Club Managers Association of America, won the bugle-gum blowing contest sponsored by Phoenix Environmental Care; Scott McElroy from Auburn University tees off in Wii golf at a Syngenta Professional Products get-together; a show-goer catches a few winks outside the convention center; and superintendents test their agronomic knowledge in a game of Up to Par at the FarmLinks booth.

We'd like to thank Dr. Scholl for helping us make it through the Golf Industry Show with our feet intact. Without those massaging gel insoles provided to us by the good doctor, we don't think our dogs would've made it through the week.

So, how many miles did you put on your leather oxfords last month in Orlando? Did you have any blowouts?

Seriously, congratulations if you made it through the GIS still standing. That's quite an accomplishment considering that a lot of attendees were so busy going from here to there and back that they were literally eating on the run (did you try one of those awful \$9 gyros at the "food" stand inside the convention center?)

About that Orange County Convention Center ... isn't it vast? Sometimes it seemed downright infinite as we walked and walked to get from one side of the convention center to the other.

And if the show seemed more crowded, it was. Jeff Bollig, director of communications for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, says attendance was up almost 12 percent from last year's show in Anaheim, Calif., with the crowd topping out at almost 26,000. Exhibit space rose nearly

9,000 square feet to about 301,000. The number of qualified buyers increased 18.5 percent to 11,500, according to Bollig, with 7,200 representing the GCSAA's segment of the show.

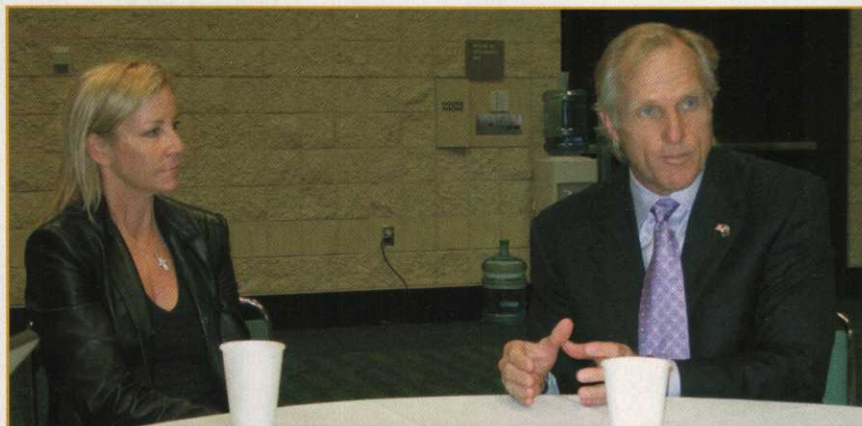
The show floor was rife with many new products as well. There was also a smorgasbord of seminars, a big golf tournament and a few celebrity sightings, including a particular Shark species and his new fiancée. And there were plenty of people bidding goodbye to Steve Mona, who attended his last show as CEO of the GCSAA.

Right man for the job

Speaking of that Shark, Greg Norman showed up at the show to pick up the GCSAA's Old Tom Morris with his significant and celebrity other, Chris Evert, by his side. Word on the show floor is the couple was very congenial, signing autographs and shaking hands.

Norman collected the GCSAA's top award, given to him for his accomplishments to the game and the industry, during the show's opening session. There might have been a few eyebrows raised when Norman was named chair of the GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf in 2003. The skeptics wondered what a famous golfer knew about golf and the environ-

Continued on page 45



► Chris Evert watches while Greg Norman waxes about golf and the environment.

Continued from page 41

ment. Was appointing Norman to the post just an exercise to get someone famous in the seat to generate publicity and cash?

Maybe so, but Norman brings more than that to the table. And five years into his post, he seems as motivated as ever about achieving harmony between golf and the environment.

Norman couldn't shut up (I mean that in a good way) during the 45-minute press conference, which could have gone on longer. He went on and on about water issues, the Augusta Syndrome and other environmental issues facing the golf course industry. Norman also understands the

plight superintendents must endure in dealing with these issues, many of which originate with golfers' increased demand for the ultimate in golf course conditions.

Norman wants to help get the word out to Joe Golfer about his golf and the environment agenda. He knows his name carries weight in doing so.

"It's important for me to be with you guys to talk about this," Norman said. "Anytime I can talk about this, I'm going to talk about it."

He's got game

Just what does Seth Strickland do for a living? He says he's a golf course superintendent, but we're beginning to wonder. Does he work on turf — or just his golf game?

Strickland, superintendent at Miami Shores Country Club in south Florida, captured his second Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) National Championship by shooting *three* 4-under-par 68s for a record-setting 12-under-par 204, the lowest total winning score in the tournament's 58-year history. Strickland's closest competitors were 16 shots behind.

"I swear, guys, I work at least eight and a half hours a day," Strickland said after whitewashing the other 96 players in the field.

Continued on page 49

PHOTO BY: BRUCE MATTHEWS, COURTESY OF GCM (BELOW)



► Seth Strickland (left) accepts another trophy from GCSAA Past President Ricky Heine after winning another national title.



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Good Show-ing

Continued from page 45

We don't doubt that, Seth. We're all just envious that you've got game and we don't. Congrats to you!

The Stimp rules!

A Stimpmeter can be more than the end-all, be-all gauge of green speed. Stimping can become a valuable agronomic



► Magician Seth Kramer wowed showgoers with his tricks at the Agrium Advanced Technologies booth.

tool that can help you make important cultural decisions on your greens when used properly.

"Green speed is not a number. It's a range," says Michael Morris, the certified golf course superintendent of Crystal Downs Country Club in Michigan. "It's an everyday condition of what golfers experience."

Morris' talk, "You Do WHAT With Your Stimpmeter?" was part of the Innovative Superintendents Sessions.

Morris says he not only uses his Stimpmeter every day to make agronomic decisions, but he actually communicates his green speeds to his mem-

bers — without lying about the speeds.

By Stimping his greens every day, Morris says he's found ways to actually raise his height of cut by experimenting with different practices of mowing and rolling on alternate days.

By measuring the results of different practices, Morris can maintain expected green speeds by rolling his greens in lieu of mowing some days, which creates less mechanical stress, saves equipment wear and frees up valuable labor resources.

"It's a paradigm shift from the way you've normally done things," he says. "Rolling every day and skipping mowing (every other day) gave us the same result."

Wetting agents at work

Wetting agents work on putting greens. That was the main message behind the research and message of Erik H. Ervin, associate professor of turfgrass physiology at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, who spoke to more than 100 superintendents during, "You Asked For It ... You Got It!," a session created by superintendents' request.

One underlying question many superintendents have about wetting agents is: Where do they hold moisture? Ervin's research suggests they lock in moisture in the top 2 inches of the soil, where they can do the most good.

"Wetting agents are doing what they are supposed to be doing, which is holding water at the surface where you want it," Ervin says.

Wetting agents can be a valuable tool where hot spots exist on greens because they help distribute moisture uniformly, Ervin says. But they don't last forever.

"You need to stay on a preventive program just like you do with fungicides," he says.

Don't run and hide

"Communication is an essential skill for the superintendent," said Mike Jousan

Continued on page 51

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Good Show-ing



► SoloRider exhibited this prototype single-rider car dressed in red, white and blue at the show in honor of those who have served in the U.S. military.

Continued from page 49

of Clear Communication Co. “Unfortunately, while most superintendents are good at turf, bugs and pesticides, they could do a lot better job of communicating.”

Jousan spoke on improving communication skills as part of the GCSAA educational program.

Building better communications skills is not easy, he acknowledged. “Work at it. Make it a priority. Practice it. Approach it the same way you would to improve any life skill.”

He said that too many superintendents pull back when it comes time to speak up. They make building relationships one of the last things they do — not the first, as they should, he said.

His advice is to be visible around the course and around the clubhouse. Be known and draw people to you, he said.

Of course, superintendents will encounter difficult people. Jousan said the way to handle those situations is to draw them to you.

“Don’t avoid them,” he said. “Approach them. Get to know them and get them to know you. Get them on your side by explaining what you are doing so they understand.”

Team! Team! Team!

Superintendents need to appreciate the time and effort it takes to maintain an equipment fleet in optimum condition. Technicians, on the other hand, have to have a good understanding of what the superintendent is trying to accomplish with the turf.

“Without a turf background, it can be difficult for a technician,” says John Fulling, certified superintendent at Kalamazoo (Mich.) Country Club. But if forced to make the choice, Fulling said he would take a good mechanic over someone with a turf background. “It’s easier to teach a technician about turf than vice versa,” he said.

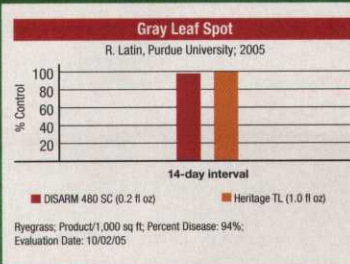
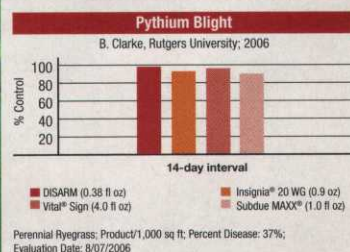
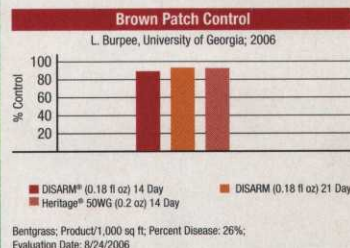
Communication is the key factor in a solid superintendent-technician rela-

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Good Show-ing

Continued from page 51

tionship, said Henry "Skip" Heinz, the technician at Kalamazoo.

Fulling and Heinz led a free-form discussion during a seminar on improving superintendent-technician relationships. Heinz and Fulling agreed they can say just about anything about course management and operations to one another and that their open communication makes both of their lives easier and more productive.

'Customer mania'

Certified Superintendent John Miller didn't get to be the tournament agronomist for the LPGA Tour by not being a king when it comes to customer service. It's a good bet Miller knows all the tricks of solid customer service when it comes to dealing with golfers. So it made sense that Miller gave a half-day presentation, "Customer Service — A Superintendent's Perspective."

Miller says it's about having a "customer-mania" mentality. He told a hypothetical story about a superintendent who planned to spray his course one morning to get it ready for the member-guest tournament in a few

days. The day before he was to spray, the superintendent received a call from a member, who was allergic to pesticides. The member wanted to play the morning of the spraying and wondered if it would be OK. The superintendent, who had accommodated the golfer before in the same situation, was in a bit of a fix this time with having to prepare the course for the member-guest.

"What would you do if you were that superintendent?" Miller asked the audience.

Two attendees had good answers.

"Try to set up the golfer at another course nearby," one attendee said.

"Get the golfer an early tee time before the spraying," another attendee added.

Miller had made his point: Just don't tell the golfer that he can't play and be done with the matter. Explain to him the circumstances and try to take care of his needs.

Time to 'go all in' with grassroots

RISE is upping the ante 150 percent in the industry's high-stakes grassroots game.

Continued on page 54



► The Orlando Magic cheerleaders were a big attraction at Floratine's party, which raised money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Maybe you saw them from behind the plants (see upper left of photograph).

► There's a New Prez in Town

Golfdom caught up with the new Golf Course Superintendents Association of America President David Downing II for a question-and-answer session. We set out to find out about Downing the man, not the manager.

Incidentally, Downing is a certified golf course superintendent and is vice president of operations/construction for Signature Golf Group in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Downing, an industry veteran and longtime member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, succeeds Ricky Heine, certified superintendent and general manager at The Golf Club Star Ranch in Austin, Texas, as president.



David Downing II

On to the interview:

▼ **How many years have you worked in the golf industry?**

A lot. I began as a summer helper in 1974. My first superintendent job was at the Williamsport (Pa.) Country Club in 1980.

▼ **What's your favorite part of the job?**

Solving problems and finding new ways of doing things that are better and more efficient or will return a better investment.

▼ **Who has been the biggest influence on your career and why?**

Wow, this could take a while. First and foremost God; we need to honor Him in all we do. After that my wife, Jo; parents; Drs. Joe Duich and Tom Watschke; Dan Fuller, greens chairman at Williamsport; Billy Buchanan, a USGA and PGA agronomist; certified superintendent Mike Smith, (my first boss and friend ever since); Dan Desmond; and Mark Kizziar. I have been blessed to have been mentored by a lot of really good people. I have also had a desire to listen, learn and then figure out how to apply what I have learned. Being able to network with people all over the country has been a terrific learning experience.

▼ **What was the defining moment in your professional life?**

I would not say there was a defining moment, but more a series of moments that prepared me for the next phase. All of it has helped prepare me for where I am at today with Signature Golf Group and becoming president of the GCSAA.

▼ **What's the greatest invention the industry has seen?**

Formalized education for the management of golf facilities. This education has driven all that is great about our business.

▼ **If you could change something about the industry right now, what would you change?**

More golfers playing more rounds!

▼ **Describe yourself in one word?**

I had to get some help with this one. My wife Jo said "grounded." My youngest son Alex said "dedicated." One of his friends said "coach." One other word I thought of was "listener."

▼ **What is your favorite hobby and why?**

Serving, whether it's for the GCSAA, coaching kids in baseball or basketball, or doing something for our church, I enjoy doing it and it helps refresh me. Right now GCSAA is my main hobby. It is important for people to serve each other. We've become too much of an "about me" society.

▼ **What is your favorite vacation spot?**

Anywhere I can enjoy time with my family. We have a very beautiful and varied country, and being able to visit different areas and enjoy what God created is great.

▼ **What is your favorite golf course besides your own?**

Wow, there are a lot of courses that I like. I really have had the pleasure of playing and seeing some of the best. To be honest, I do not have a favorite. But having been involved in the construction of 10 courses, I've really learned to appreciate the nuances of course design.

▼ **It's your last day on Earth. What would you do?**

Spend it with my wife, Jo.

▼ **I hope to be remembered as:**

Someone who cared.

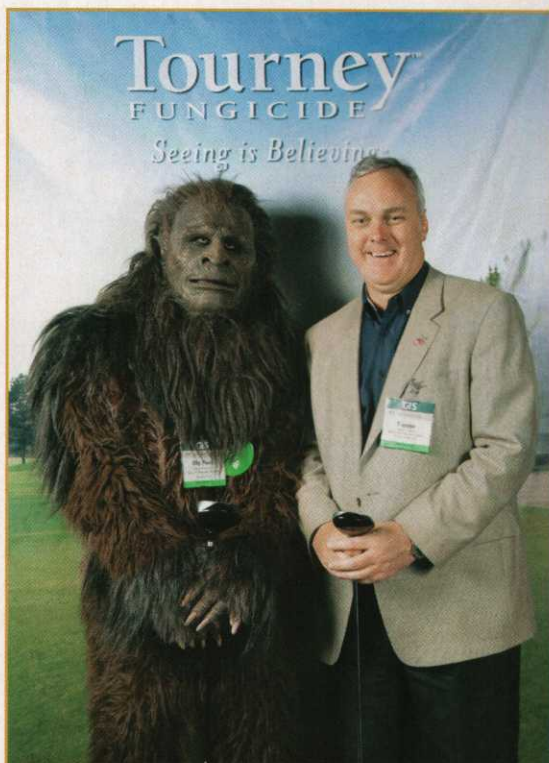


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► What, me scared? Valent Professional Products' President Trevor Thorley posed with Bigfoot, who has been the star of the company's recent ad campaign, at the company's booth. If Bigfoot is 7-foot-5 as they say, that should put Thorley about 7-foot-7, according to this picture.

Continued from page 52

The gutsy call to action came at the organization's annual Industry Grassroots Breakfast held in conjunction with the show.

After a few years of steady growth, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) has about 400 grassroots members. The organization is pleased with the progress, but is betting big time that the industry can add at least 600 more soldiers to its army of industry advocates working at the local, state and national levels.

"This 1,000 grassroots members by 2009 is a hard-line number," underlined Karen Reardon, RISE director of communications and grassroots, at the Jan. 31 gathering at Orlando's Rosen Centre Hotel. "Allen James (RISE president) is going to hold our feet to the fire on this one."

Josh Weeks, Bayer CropScience vice president and chairman of the RISE governing board, said the grassroots membership

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On behalf of LebanonTurf, thank you for helping make our 2008 Dog Calendar a success. We appreciate those who stopped by our booth at the Golf Industry Show to cast their vote. While it was a close race with runner-up dog, Ryder, owed by David Phipps of Stone Creek Golf Club in Oregon City, OR, LebanonTurf is proud to announce the 2008 Dog of the Year is Bandit, owned by Brian Minemier of Burlington County Country Club in Mt. Laurel, NJ. Bandit, our March dog, is a nine-year old yellow labrador and a constant fixture on the golf course. He enjoys long rides on the golf car and assists in geese and squirrel removal. As Dog of the Year, Bandit's owner will receive \$2,000 for his local golf course association and \$500 for Brian and Bandit to spend together. Congratulations Bandit and Brian!

Look for information in the April issue about the 2009 calendar!



Improving the Way Professionals Care for Turf



Good Showing

Continued from page 54

surge is required for the industry to secure its rightful place in the growing green movement. RISE's James seconded the notion.

"We're being left behind in the green sustainability movement," James said. "In fact, we're being looked at as the demon in this one."

The shifting political landscape also has created an uphill battle, one that James expects to mount in the coming years. James noted that Republicans are down 32 representatives in the House of Representatives and have 19 seats up for grabs due to retiring representatives. The picture in the Senate isn't much better, with Democrats up two seats and 23 of the 49 Republican senators seeking re-election.

"We want all companies to feel an obligation — not just an opportunity — to step up, volunteer and join us today in our grass-roots efforts," James said. "Right now, we're not getting a lot of support from either side of the House and Senate. Fewer and fewer will stand up and defend us publicly. More than ever before, we need all the help we can get."

Goodbye and good luck, Steve Mona

Next year, Steve Mona will attend the GIS as CEO of the World Golf Foundation. At the President's Reception, a "special farewell" was held to honor Mona, who served as the CEO of the GCSAA for 14 years.

"You know, you raised our boat, baby," Sean Hoolehan, who wrapped up his term on the GCSAA Board of Directors during the meeting, told Mona during his speech.

During his speech, outgoing GCSAA President Ricky Heine looked at Mona sitting in the first row and said, "Steve, you've been a rock for this foundation."

Golfdom would like to thank Mona for his help over the years and wish him the best in his new endeavor.

Word is the GCSAA has narrowed its search to four candidates to replace Mona, whose last day was Feb. 29. A decision and announcement of the new GCSAA CEO is expected in early to mid-March, but may have come by the time you read this. ■

► See the smile on Steve Mona's face? The Toro folks surprised Mona with a special award for his service. That's CEO Michael Hoffman presenting it to a grinning Mona.

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