



# Great Expectat

My crystal ball may be a little hazy, but I believe San Diego could hold a bright future for the Golf Industry Show in its sandy, beach-filled hands

**BY CHRISTOPHER S. GRAY SR.,  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

Everyone can agree it's been a tumultuous year in the golf industry. More courses are still closing than opening, piling up more job losses in an already bleak economy. Some golf course superintendents are being asked to take voluntary time off without pay to help alleviate revenue shortfalls and budget gaps at their facilities. And now we're beginning to see cracks in the unified Golf Industry Show, as the Club Managers Association of America exits after this year's show without even seeing any potential benefits of the newly configured format. With all this chaos surrounding our industry, what's the atmosphere going to be like in San Diego at the GIS set for Feb. 8-12?

After last year's disappointing numbers in New Orleans, everyone is hoping for a sizable

PHOTO (LEFT) BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.; PHOTOS (ABOVE, RIGHT) COURTESY: GCSAA



# ions

rebound in San Diego. And while you can certainly chalk up some of the low numbers in New Orleans to the diminishing interest of the host city, a hefty amount can also be attributed to the crummy economy we're in. Almost every one of us with a budget has had to cut virtually everything that's not an absolute necessity to maintain a golf course, including the line item of "travel and education."

It's possible that skipping the GIS last year was an isolated phenomenon for many superintendents. But it's more likely the people who missed last year are also going to miss again this year. Hey, it's not like the economy suddenly turned around and the golf industry is on the rise again. Clubs and courses are still hurting, and many superintendents from those clubs won't attend the show. Obviously, we won't be tossing back any drafts with those guys and gals, who would rather stay employed for the other 51 weeks of the year.

Don't think for a moment superintendents are the only ones affected by this continued economic downturn. Our industry's suppliers, the vendors at this show, have been hit hard, too. It's also not cheap for them to go to the show, considering the costs

of booth-space rental, not to mention the cost it takes to house and feed the employees the companies take to staff their booths.

While these expenses have continued to grow, the number of qualified buyers visiting their booths have dropped — down 3,000 last year when compared to the year before. So some vendors are decreasing booth space, bringing less staff and reduce the number of client dinners where the bar tab typically dwarfs the food bill. The question is: Are some vendors skipping the show because of this trend?

On the up side, the shorter trade-show format should be more productive for vendors and attendees, especially with no other scheduled events to compete for attendees' time. Rather than stretch out the trade show with a longer distributor preview on the front end and a seriously empty floor on Saturday morning on the back end, this two-day format has been eagerly anticipated for years. The trade show should become the only focus for the two days in the middle of the show resulting in better attendance from qualified buyers and more attentive vendors hoping to capitalize on them. Plus,

*Continued on page 32*

**The shorter trade-show format, set for two days on Feb. 10 and 11, should be more productive for vendors and attendees.**



**A good showing  
will likely provide  
some real hope  
that the worst  
is behind us.**



*Continued from page 31*

on Thursday, Feb. 11, there's a show floor happy hour from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. I'm in!

Finally, San Diego represents the last year of the unified GIS, with the CMAA departing from the rest of the flock. With only a few years of active partnership between the three sponsors, including the National Golf Course Owners Association, the CMAA's departure marks a potential that will go forever unrealized.

When conceived and introduced, the newly combined conference and show was suppose to ring in an unprecedented collaboration from everyone within the golf industry to help unite all facets of the golfing community. But sometimes you simply can't fit a square peg into a round hole.

From the reactions of many, the CMAA will likely not be missed in future shows. However, it certainly seems a little disappointing that people who share a common passion for the game of golf couldn't find a way to make this relationship work for the

betterment of all parties involved. In a time when almost every facet of the industry is struggling, presenting a sentiment of solidarity between all the associations would've not only been a monumental success, but also an inspiring act that our industry sorely needs right now.

My crystal ball may be a little hazy, but I believe San Diego could very well hold a bright future for the GIS in its sandy, beach-filled hands. Everyone, from the vendors to the GCSAA executives, is watching and hoping for a good turn out in numbers. A poor showing could indicate a continued downward spiral of our industry, economically speaking. A good showing will likely provide some real hope that the worst is behind us as we prepare to recapture what we've lost in the upcoming season. ■

*Gray, a contributing editor to Golfdom, is general manager and superintendent of the Marvel Golf Club in Benton, Ky.*

PHOTO BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.

# THE FUTURE HAS ARRIVED

## greensIRON 3900

POWER, PRECISION, PERFORMANCE  
MAKE A BIG IMPACT, WITHOUT LEAVING ONE!

 

GET THE GI3900 WORKING FOR YOU! Toll Free 1-800-661-4942 or visit [www.woodbayturftech.com](http://www.woodbayturftech.com)