

Off The Fringe

Good Start at Green Start

Assistant superintendents learn from the best in the business at the Sixth Annual Green Start Academy

BY BETH GERACI

The morning air was cool and crisp as 50 assistant golf course superintendents gathered outdoors at the North Carolina State Turfgrass Laboratory. Their nervous excitement was palpable as the sun's pale yellow beams blanketed the property.

It was with that backdrop that the Sixth Annual Green Start Academy got underway, the 50 assistants having been handpicked for the two-day event based on essays they wrote. Green Start was as much a reward for the assistants' ambition and leadership as it was a valuable opportunity for them to propel their careers further still.

Hosted by Bayer Environmental Science and John Deere Golf, this year's Academy comprised two days of educational discussions led by some of the country's most renowned superintendents and turfgrass professionals.

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The reputable lineup featured industry heavyweights such as N.C. State turfgrass professor Grady Miller, Ph.D.; certified golf course superintendents Bob Farren (Pinehurst Resort, Pinehurst, N.C.); Patrick Finlen (The Olympic Club, San Francisco); and Paul Grogan (TPC Deere Run, Moline, Ill.); golf business authority Henry DeLozier (Global Golf Advisors); and many others.

Most of the Academy's discussions took place at the Bayer Environmental Science Development and Training Center, a picturesque 281-acre expanse in Clayton, N.C., where Bayer performs turfgrass research.

It was there that the assistants reaped advice and information from some of the best in the business. DeLozier urged the assistants to actively drive up the value of

their clubs, to "use this current economic environment and make it work for you." The GCSAA's Greg Lyman advised them to practice sustainability. Farren, Finlen and Grogan shared words of professional wisdom. And Chris Carson, CGCS, inspired the assistants to make the most of their careers.

"Figure out what you have that others don't and learn how to package it," he advised.

At its core, the Academy was an exercise not only in turfgrass science, business and career advice, but also in networking, motivation and forging new friendships.

"Everyone seemed to gel here," said Chartiers Country Club assistant superintendent Jonathan Dees.

What stood out most prominently about Green Start was the deeply rooted knowledge of all those who presented, and the passion and drive of 50 assistant superintendents determined to leave their mark on the field.



Assistant superintendents prepare for a tour of the Bayer Environmental Science Development and Training Center in Clayton, N.C.

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