



"We want to get and keep your attention so we can educate you in the latest products and innovations. We are also in the business of helping to grow the game so we can all stay employed."

JOEL JACKSON, *Contributing Editor*

A tale of two golf worlds

After 30-plus years in the golf industry, I have a mix of chlorophyll and ink in my blood. The chlorophyll is from my years as a superintendent, and the ink from my years as a journalist covering this great industry.

I used that blend of elements to my advantage when I attended the annual Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) and International Network of Golf (ING) annual spring conferences. They are my journalists' education equivalent of the Golf Industry Show and Florida Turfgrass Association turf conference.

At the TOCA conference we talk turf, landscape and pest control, and I'm rubbing elbows and talking shop with folks from all the industry publications. Our educational sessions are focused on using the latest technologies in order to keep you informed. We also have sessions on refreshing our creative juices. We want to get and keep your attention so we can educate you in the latest products and innovations that might help you do a better job environmentally and economically. We are also in the business of

helping to grow the game so we can all stay employed.

A couple of examples from this year's TOCA out in Portland, Ore., were the presentations by Dr. Milt Engleke on the latest turfgrass breeding research, which leads to grasses better suited to a variety of ecosystems around the country, rather than one turf fits all. That was followed by two writing workshops by renowned writing instructor Ann Wylie, who challenged us to "write like a roller coaster" to jump-start our creativity.

A couple of weeks later I attended the International Network of Golf Conference at the Reunion Resort, just 20 miles from my house in Orlando, and also the same facility that soon will have hosted its second *Golfdom* Summit. At the ING, I venture into the golf lifestyle side of the industry. Attendees are from golfing publications, which primarily talk about, travel, resorts, golf

equipment (balls and sticks), training aids and apparel. It's the front-of-the-house part of the business. I enjoy attending these sessions so I might help in some small way to provide a connection between the clubhouse and golf maintenance.

I see more people are becoming aware of the environmental issues facing golf, especially in the area of water availability. Getting the "playing the game" folks and golf maintenance folks on the same page is critical for addressing regulatory and growing the game issues. They go hand in hand.

This year ING had a "Best Practices" session, which covered topics like marketing the facility, effectively using online media, charitable fundraising and a host of growing the game topics.

All these topics depend on a well-maintained golf course to attract and retain golfers.

Two topics got my atten-

tion. Golf writer Tom Harack talked about The Island Hills GC in Centerville, Mich. At Island Hills, they utilize multiple layouts within their basic 18-hole layout to address the time, cost and difficulty factors that hurt participation in the game. Beside the traditional 18-hole course with two nine-hole loops, this course also has a loop of 12 holes, two loops of seven holes each, and one of five holes. All holes have six sets of tees. While this was a very site-specific approach, the concept is adaptable to other courses.

The other topic by Pam Swenson, CEO of the EWGA, is a promotion by the National Women's Golf Alliance and Executive Women's Golf Association. It's called "Rolling Out the Green Carpet" Certification. The certification is based on a facility's ability to make golf clubs more welcoming and attractive to women, and therefore helping grow the game. (*Editor's note: more on this program next month.*)

The facility is evaluated on five key areas: Playability, Customer Service, Course Amenities, Facility Amenities and Golf Programs. Courses that achieve a score of 80-percent or higher in at least three areas earn a certification status. Certifications are good for three years.

Maybe it's that chlorophyll in my veins, but it's easy for me to see that superintendents play a key role in all of these initiatives!

Joel Jackson, CGCSA-Ret., is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.