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THE GRASS ROOTS

an official publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association

Volume XV, No. 3

May/June 1988

The 1988 WGCSA Education Program—

“The Year of the USGA”

By Michael Semler

The Education Committee of the WGCSA has set the speaker program for the 1988 monthly meetings with a theme of the “Year of the USGA”. Joining us will be USGA Agronomists Stan Zontek and James Latham, and the USGA Green Section National Director, Bill Bengeyfield. They will share their expertise on the subjects of golf turf management and current USGA research projects.

Since its inception in November of 1920, the USGA has been the only non-partial, scientific agency working full-time in turfgrass science as it relates to golf turf management. Now, with members of Wisconsin's turf management community making an all out effort for its own research facility, named appropriately, the *O.J. Noer Center for Turfgrass Research*, it will be very timely to hear from the USGA. It has been a leader in golf turf research and in the education of American golfers on the necessity for research and the dire need for future planning and funding.

Stan Zontek, the Green Section Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region, will bring us up to date in April on what is new and innovative from the East Coast.

In September, our own Great Lakes Regional Director, James Latham, will give us a 1988 season wrap up and report card on what he has seen in our own area of the country.

A very special guest has cordially accepted an invitation to address the WGCSA May meeting. He is Bill Bengeyfield, and in addition to being National Director of the USGA Green Section, he is also Editor of the USGA *Green Section Record*, and Chairman of the USGA Research Committee. He

will address us on the need for support for the USGA turfgrass research program and will update us on its primary goals and current results.

Mr. Bengeyfield graduated from Cornell University's College of Agriculture in 1949 with a Bachelor of Science degree and joined the New York State Extension Service in that year. In 1953, he joined the USGA and was appointed Western Director the following year. He was chosen National Director of the USGA Green Section in 1982 and serves in that position to date.

It is an honor for the WGCSA to have representatives of the USGA Green Section speak and share 68 years of knowledge and service with us.

In 1920, E.J. Marshall, a Green Committee Chairman at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, had the idea to form a cooperation between the USGA and the United States Department of Agriculture to work together on turfgrass problems. This cooperation led to the formation of the Green Section.

Shortly thereafter, in 1921, the *Bulletin* of the Green Section, one of the parent publications of the current *Green Section Record*, was formed. It remains today one of the best publications for disseminating turf research information and providing quality maintenance procedures to subscribing clubs.

In 1932, Dr. John Monteith, the Green Section Director, published “Turf Diseases and Their Control”. He developed the first effective fungicides for turfgrass use. Prior to that, extensive losses of turfgrass to diseases was

quite common.

From 1920 to 1953, the Green Section primarily conducted research, first at Arlington, Virginia and then at Beltsville, Maryland. This research made up much of the published material. Invitations were made to “Greenkeepers”, Club Officials and Golf Professionals to the National Field Days. Research results and exhibits were discussed and explained to benefit those in attendance. Golf professionals were even allowed to practice on new varieties of bentgrass, U-3 bermudagrass, Merion bluegrass and other experimental grasses.

In 1953, however, the Green Section took a monumental direction shift by offering the USGA Green Section Regional Turf Service. This service provided direct on-site visits by the Green Section staff who would advise the host clubs on their turf problems and solutions. Now, with this directional change, it would continue to provide financial support and directional guidance for research, but the research would be done by others. The Green Section's specialized staff of trained agronomists would disseminate these results directly to the golf courses.

As originally established, the Turf Advisory Service had two goals: 1) Intimate, specialized consultation service on a regular and permanent basis, located to best serve the convenience of the subscribing clubs; and, 2) maintenance and coordination of turf experimentation on a broad scale to bring the greatest possible return to the member clubs.

Since World War II, the Green Section worked toward decentralizing

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