

# BEST EVER?

By Monroe S. Miller

Although not scientific, my sense is that most people who attended the 32nd annual Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium thought it was the best one ever. My personal history with the Symposium goes back to the second one in 1967; I missed two while in the Army and another due to a personal conflict. I would judge the 1997 Symposium to be in the top three. It was terrific! An attendance record of 232 was set.

What makes for a memorable event? Lots of things are important—venue, weather (can you get there without driving hassles?), time of year, topic. And lectures.

The strength of the Symposium this year was in the roster of speakers. The Symposium committee selected a topic that piques the interest of all golf course superintendents, and then they chose top notch individuals to talk about this great topic.

This year's roster of speakers had the intellect of faculty like Dr. Wayne Kussow and Dr. Norm Hummel (former faculty member). Included was a designer (one of the wittiest and one of the best!) — Brian Silva, and a golf course builder (Lee Bruce and Dave Weber). The program presented the USGA agronomists — our own Bob Vavrek and Jim Moore, who is the USGA Green Section's construction educator. And to make the program complete, two end users — golf course superintendents — spoke to us. The entire meeting flowed from start to finish in a way seldom seen in educational seminars.

Dr. Kussow got the meeting off to a good start with a discussion about USGA Green Section specification greens. He asked some tough questions, brought out strengths and shortcomings and generally set the stage (as a good keynoter does) for the rest of the speakers.

Norm Hummel has left the ivy covered walls at Cornell University and entered the world of American business. His lab offers analysis services for soils and construction materials for golf courses, and he is gaining a reputation as a credible consultant on soil related issues on golf courses.



Dr. Norm Hummel made a point with Marc Davison.



Keynote speaker Dr. Wayne Kussow.



Lee Bruce thinks about his answer to a question from the audience.



Three of the most veteran and finest golf course superintendents in America — Wayne Otto, Paul Voykin and Dan Quest.



The head table, left to right are: Rod Johnson, Al Nees, Bruce Worzella, Bob Vavrek, Mark Kienert, Wayne Otto, Gordon Waddington and Terry Ward.

Hummel built his lecture around the four general methods of putting green construction commonly seen these days: 1) USGA Green Section method, 2) simplified USGA method, 3) California method, and 4) push up or native soil method.

It took longer than a lot of us had hoped, but we finally got Brian Silva back on our Wisconsin program. He's a little more gray than he was when he was last here, but his sense of humor is sharper! "I'm confused,"

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Brian declared. "Some are good, a few are thin are there are isolated dry spots!" Silva visited about greens he has built using different methods and concluded there were surprising similar results. This man and his success must make Geoff Cornish smile.

It made sense to follow the lecture of a good golf course architect with some thoughts from a good golf course builder, or, better yet, two good builders. Dave Weber's message, clearly, was that construction of golf greens requires great flexibility for success. Bruce Company founder, Lee Bruce, has seen a lot of different circumstances in the many years he's been in the business. The earthmoving has not changed much, but everything else involved in new course construction has been "all over the map". He does predict that in the future there will be courses built for the less affluent.

The last time Jim Moore participated in the Symposium he gave the keynote address; it was super. His



A look at the large noon luncheon crowd.



Jim Latham and Mike Handrich enjoy good conversation at the luncheon.



Mark Jackson accepts thanks from Session Chairman Mike Lee.

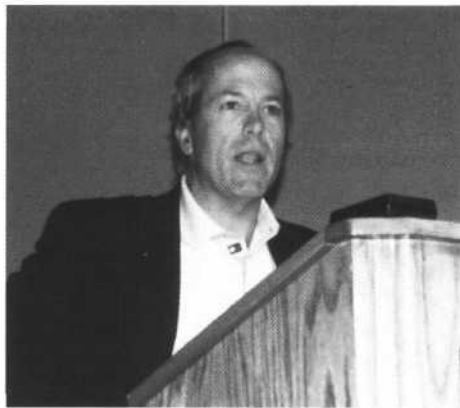


Jeff Carlson answers a question about Widows Walk Golf Course.

return this year was in his role as an USGA Green Section construction guru. His comments focused on factors important in green construction, factors like location, level of maintenance expected, superintendent skills, and construction methods.

Golf course superintendents like hearing other golf course superintendents speak, and two really good golf course superintendents AND speakers traveled to Milwaukee this fall to share their experiences. Mark Jackson is the course manager at Detroit Golf Club and talked about rebuilding greens at that venerable old golf course. Jeff Carlson comes from a new course that already has generated considerable headlines and interest. Designed by Dr. Mike Hurdzan, the Widows Walk Golf Course was an experiment in construction and is, still, an experiment in progress. Grass varieties, grass mixtures and different root zone mixes are but a few of the variables that went into this Massachusetts golf course. It will be talked about and studied for years.

The Symposium committee figured if you have Jim Moore at hand then it makes sense to get him to the podium twice. Jim shared his "Checklist for Construction Materials and Quality Construction" with us. It was information and advice that was good to hear. Demand has led Jim to get it



Brian Silva will be remembered as one of the most interesting speakers ever.

out on the Internet. I would be willing to bet money Moore will be back in Milwaukee next year for the Symposium as a speaker.

Bob Vavrek continued a long standing tradition by wrapping up the Symposium as the last speaker. It was a good job by an accomplished speaker.

Already, before we left for home, the topic for next year was chosen — GROW IN. It should be another good meeting. 🌱



Dave Weber of The Bruce Company.



Jim Moore appeared on the Symposium twice.



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