

# Everything Irrigation Explored During NGL Conference



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The Northern Great Lakes Golf Course Superintendents Association (NGLGCSA) did it again. Their 12th annual Turf Symposium was another very successful one. The conference was held a little later than usual, March 26, 2001, which is why some of the usual attendees from southern Wisconsin may not have attended. The snow had just melted in the south and those superintendents were out raking and preparing their courses, which may have contributed to the slightly less than usual attendance. The northern superintendents had no problem being there, as most of their courses were still 6-24 inches under snow.

Every year the conference committee decides on one subject for their symposium and finds speakers to explore every aspect of the subject. Experts are brought in from far and wide to share their expertise on the subject and everyone leaves greatly educated. The theme this year was irrigation. Talks focused on everything from irrigation installation, design, hardware, trouble-shooting, fertigation, water quality, pumps, ponds and more. Everyone there will be much better armed to take on watering issues in 2001.

The presentations ranged from practical to academic. Dr. John Stier saved the day by giving one more talk than he was supposed to give when a previously scheduled person couldn't attend. John shined like he always does giving a talk about *Poa supina*. He told us about when to use it and the best management practices to maintain it. He also gave an update on the proposed DNR NR151 regulations for non-point pollution abatement and how it will affect the green

industry. He suggested everyone write the DNR or attend a hearing to express concerns about some of the DNR's odd reasoning related to urban settings. In the afternoon John gave an in-depth critique on using effluent water for irrigation in addition to other water source issues. I don't think I would ever consider using effluent with all the problems of salts, solids, nutrients, negative plant and soils effects, and health concerns that he alluded to.

An old Wisconsin friend, Jim Spindler who now resides in Florida working for TerraBiotics, gave a presentation on fertigation. He told about the proper hardware and fertilizer that works best for fertigation and talked about other plant nutrition information. I had to question one of his slides that conveyed fertigation is better for the environment than conventional fertilizing practices, when University of Wisconsin-Madison research shows that little to no runoff occurs with conventional

practices. And I'm not aware of any research that finds fertigation has less nutrient runoff. Other than that point, it was an interesting talk and showed turf managers that fertigation offers another tool for them to consider.

Then there were numerous talks on all the hardware that makes up an irrigation system. Adam Mock from Reinders got a lively discussion going when he educated us on control systems options. He hit on all options — from practical to low-cost to computerized. In addition to control systems he told about the importance of maintaining grounding wires, surge suppressors, line conditioners, and so much more. Adam, like most of the speakers, has many years of experience and shared his knowledge generously.

Speaking of experience, two other great presentations came from John Markestad from Century Rain Aid and Hugh Wakefield from H.T. Wakefield Technical Services. John's talk was



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Dr. John Stier.



Panel discussions are becoming increasingly popular at educational meetings all over Wisconsin.



John Markestad.

'Troubleshooting Valve-In-Head Systems Before You Call An Expert.' His tips will help us save time, money and frustration this next season. He also pointed out times when it's best to call in the cavalry. Hugh's talk focused on the muscle behind the irrigation system - the pump station. The kind of work that he specializes in should mostly be left to the experts because serious injury or death could occur if you have an accident working around that much electricity. He said we can do minor lubrication, and suggest-

ed we definitely monitor the pump facility often to look for irregularities. But the best pump station maintenance we can do is to schedule routine check-ups by qualified pump or electrical contractors. Routine maintenance costs a fraction of an emergency call in the middle of the summer!

The last words of wisdom were given during a round table discussion moderated by Dr. Stier. A superb panel of superintendents - Dan Barrett, Mike Jaeger and Fred Fabian - described their experiences with new irrigation installations. One common theme they all echoed was quality control. Make sure contaminants are kept out of the pipes by hasty assemblers, and

keep an eye on and educate the people doing the work about what is expected.

That about sums up the education. The rest of the day was spent having fun participating in the silent auction and raffle prizes. The NGLGCSA conference committee does a great job raising money at their conference to make sure the University does research pertinent to theirs and all of Wisconsin's turf industry's needs. I don't know how much money they raised but it appeared to be substantial. So, in sum, the conference raised important research money, and all attendees had lots of fun and received tons of education. Good job NGL. 🌿

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