

38th ANNUAL WISCONSIN GOLF TURF SYMPOSIUM



By **Dustin Riley**, Golf Course Superintendent, Oconomowoc Golf Club

The Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Milorganite Division of MMSD presented the 38th Annual Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium on November 18th and 19th, 2003 at The American Club located in Kohler. The title was "*Poa*, Twenty Years Later."

Twenty years earlier, in 1983, the 18th Symposium presented "The Facts and Fallacies of POA ANNUA Management." Twenty years ago, the main objective of most golf course superintendents and other turf managers was to prevent, reduce or eliminate any *Poa annua* contamination. *Poa annua* was "bad". *Poa* couldn't be trusted to live through summer. *Poa* couldn't be trusted to survive the Wisconsin winters. *Poa* couldn't be protected from many turf diseases. However, that was twenty years ago.

The 2003 Symposium assembled many of the nation's top *Poa annua* experts to present research and new management techniques contradicting many of the "facts and fallacies" presented at the 18th Symposium. Dr. John Stier of the UW-Madison, Dr. Joe Vargas of Michigan State University, Dr. Frank Rossi of Cornell University, Dr. Ron Calhoun of Michigan State University and Dr. Bruce Clarke of Rutgers University represented the research and technical information. Local superintendents Rod Johnson of Pine Hills CC and Monroe Miller of Blackhawk CC, along with several out-of-state superintendents, presented their experiences and acquired knowledge to the eager-to-listen audience. It appeared by the attendance numbers, turf questions and

the conversations among attendees that this symposium was definitely one of the best. The Symposium committee should be congratulated on assembling a wonderful line-up of speakers covering such an important topic.

Dr. Joe Vargas began this year's Symposium by introducing a couple new ideas and terms, which caused some confusion when discussing annual vs. perennial *Poa annua*. In his presentation, Dr. Vargas presented many slides and information disproving the "old" thoughts that *Poa annua* is shallow-rooted and heat intolerant. With the proper management, turf managers can maintain deep rooting *Poa annua* while maintaining their *Poa* stand through summer stresses with the proper application of fungicides. It is Dr. Vargas' contention that *Poa annua* dies from summer diseases, not from heat and drought stress. During his explanations, Dr. Vargas introduced the term "colonizing *Poa*" for the quarter-sized *Poa* patches that produce seed heads and the term "competitive *Poa*" for the non-seeding spreading *Poa* communities. *Poa annua* begins its invasion as a colonizer type, eventually mutating or adapting into a competitive type.

Dr. Frank Rossi then presented the biology and ecology of *Poa annua*. Dr. Rossi reminded or educated the audience on the growth habits, life cycle and other growth processes such as root production and flowering.

Dr. John Stier followed by presenting data involving the effects of heat, light and winter stresses on *Poa*. One of the more memorable research information pre-



A long-standing friend of Wisconsin's golf course superintendents - Dr. Joe Vargas.



It doesn't seem possible that Dr. Frank Rossi left Wisconsin for Cornell seven years ago. It was great to have him back to our Symposium.

sented concerned the response of *Poa* to freezing temperatures. The research yielded results proving that low temperature winter kill began with the root mass freezing and then progressing upward toward the crown. Although the defense against low temperature winterkill has not been determined, the discovery that the low temperature freezing begins at the roots will hopefully speed the discovery of developing winter tolerant *Poa* stands.



Dr. John Stier represented our land grant university at the 2003 Symposium.



For many, the 2003 Symposium was the first time we'd heard Dr. Ron Calhoun of Michigan State. He is a very capable young faculty member.

Dr. Ron Calhoun presented an energetic discussion on several of the control options against *Poa*. Although Dr. Calhoun discussed many of the current growth regulators and herbicides available to the turf industry, he introduced the soon to be release product titled Velocity. This new chemistry has produced effective removal of *Poa annua* in bentgrass stands, even at green height of cut. The results seem promising. When Velocity becomes available in 2005 (estimated) control rates and application treatments should be determined and labeled.

Dr. Bruce Clarke presented modern disease management of *Poa annua*. Crown Rot

Anthracnose has always been a very destructive turf disease on *Poa annua*. Over the past several years, the frequency and severity of anthracnose in Eastern US has prompted a serious re-evaluation of chemical controls. If approached correctly and treated preventively, crown rot anthracnose can be controlled and the damage reduced. However, if the disease symptoms begin and damage occurs, the curative process may result in thousands of chemical dollars and many sleepless nights for the superintendent.

Several out of state golf course superintendents supplied their perspectives on *Poa* philosophy and management theories. Mike



President Brandenburg ran the show for the last time. We're going to miss this guy!



Jung, Stier and Abler of Wisconsin visit with Cornell's Rossi, a friend and former colleague.

Morris of Crystal Downs CC in Michigan explained his experiences and management techniques. Craig Currier of Bethpage State Park in New York provided information on U.S. Open preparations. Craig also provided slides of one of the Bethpage State golf courses that is operating "pesticide-free". Those illustrations provided further proof that *Poa annua* cannot survive environmental stresses without the protection from chemical applications.

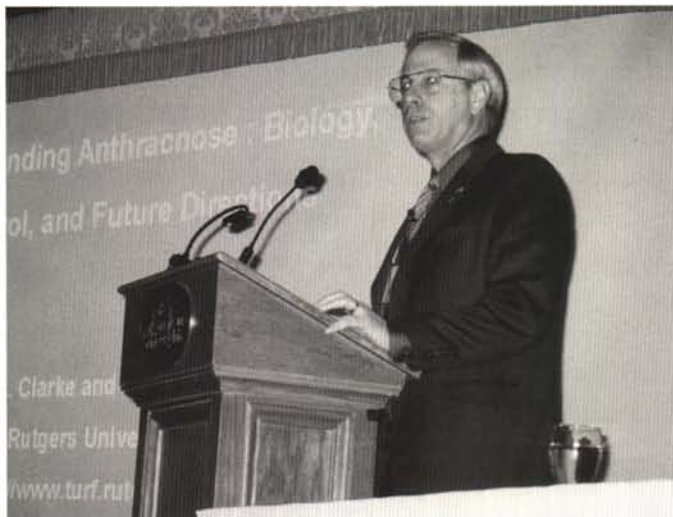
Michael McNulty of the Philadelphia CC in Pennsylvania explained the Philadelphia CC's conversion to bentgrass. The ryegrass/*Poa* fairways were successfully fumigated with the granular

product, Basamid. Thorough application and proper seeding resulted in about 100% bentgrass cover in about 60 days. Michael's experience with Basamid answered many questions many superintendents may have had concerning the fumigant.

Two in-state superintendents, Rod Johnson and Monroe Miller, supplied the finale to the Symposium by giving their opinions toward *Poa* management at their respective golf courses. For Monroe, managing the *Poa annua* stand at Blackhawk CC in Madison is a necessity, due to the high population. Rod Johnson, Pine Hills CC, has spent his career defending against the invasion of *Poa*, only to

see his populations increase and become "resistant" to chemical and management efforts.

Twenty years ago, maintaining solid bentgrass stands produced the great playing surfaces. Today, *Poa annua* can also produce a quality, playing surface. Management just requires a different approach. Understanding the biology, ecology and requirements of *Poa annua*, turf managers can grow and maintain great playing *Poa* stands. If reducing *Poa annua* is the goal, hopefully new chemicals, such as Velocity, will provide some defense against the "bad" grass. ♣



One of Wisconsin's favorite turfgrass pathologists - Dr. Bruce Clarke from Rutgers University.



Mike Morris, superintendent of the famed Crystal Downs CC in beautiful Frankfort, Michigan, made his second Symposium appearance in the span of three years.



Craig Currier, Mike McNulty and Mike Morris gave wonderful presentations on their management programs and techniques. They are all at the top of our profession.



Craig Currier even found time for a book signing!