

GCSAA Returns To Vegas

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

It has been 15 years since the GCSAA Educational Conference and Show visited Las Vegas. The 2012 Golf Industry Show is in the books and by most accounts it was a huge success.

Qualified buyer attendance, was 7,068 or a 2.6 percent increase over last year from Orlando and the most since the event was in Orlando in 2008. It is clear the golf industry has been hit hard by the economic downturn but we may be turning a positive corner and vendors had to be happy with the turnout and very busy show floor.

I thought the show floor was as busy as I have seen it in years and on Wednesday it was difficult to do business in some of the booths due to the crowds.

I think Vegas is a love it or leave it town and not for everyone but it is within driving distance of some major golf areas.

The 2012 Golf Industry Show attracted 540 exhibitors spread across 177,300 net square feet of exhibit space over the two-day event at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Total attendance was 14,706, down less than one-half of one percent (14,772) from

last year. The decrease came in non-buyer registrants (guests, exhibitors and media, down 327 from 2011) that offset increases in paying attendees. Both the GCSAA and NGCOA conference attendance totals were up.

In my opinion there is still room for contraction on the number of vendors and size of the show floor. Each year there are vendors who have little chance of attracting attendees to stop much less making enough sales to recover their costs.

For a number of reasons besides not having a life I am a GIS groupie and attend every session I can, visit with every vendor and see every product possible. This year I paid my own way so I wanted to get all I could out of the show, but when my employer pays for it I do the same thing out of respect for their investment.

Leaving the state for education is a big deal for Fond du Lac County and I am one of the few who do it on a regular basis so I feel obligated to get all I can out of the show.

Because of my quest for information I do not see much of the host city as my nights

are spent sleeping and my days learning. I did get out to eat a few times and visited plenty of hospitality rooms. I disappointingly missed the Wisconsin Room to attend a session on how bad 2011 was for the golf industry and predictions for 2012. In hindsight it was a poor choice!

Friday afternoon waiting for my midnight flight I spent some time and walked the strip. I made a point to visit Caesars Palace in honor of the movie "The Hangover." No I didn't ask if it was the real Caesars Palace as my daughter requested but I was amazed at the property with marble, fountains and statues throughout. Caesars has its own mall built to the same high standards as the hotel. The newer properties on the strip are just amazing.

The major hotels are designed to ensure you walk through a casino or two on your way to your room so they do what they can to make their investment.

You could tell traffic was picking up for the weekend as the strip was very busy on Friday night and the hotel lobbies were packed with happy gamblers coming to town..

I stayed at The Riviera which was one of GCSAA's recommended hotels. The rooms and hotel were okay for me and at a decent price. The main thing is it was within walking distance of the conference center so I did not have to wait for buses or pay for cabs. It was a bit old and rundown but full of history of days and stars gone by. The food was okay and economical and the gift shop had prices for snacks and beverages well below normal. My only complaint was my \$20 in the quarter slot machine did not last more than 3 minutes but I did put \$20 on the Cubs to win the World Series at some pretty good odds so I will be rolling in dough come October.

The end of the Vegas strip with the Riviera, Circus Circus and Stratosphere is old and simple in comparison to the upscale monstrosities on the other end. There are two huge complexes under construction near the Riviera but my cabbie said they were shut down midway due to the economy.



GCSAA President Bob Randquist and CEO Rhett Evans accept a check for \$1,000,000,000 from former Toro Company CEO Kendrick Melrose. The donation is to be used to support golf course superintendents trip to the GCSAA Education Conference and Golf Industry Show.



GCSAA CEO Rhett Evans provides an update on the Environmental Institute For Golf



Dr. Peter Derneoden, University of Maryland accepts the Colonel John Morley Distinguished Service Award.



David Phipps, Stone Creek Golf Club, Oregon accepts the Presidents Award for Environmental Stewardship.



Old Tom Morris Award Winner Peter Jacobsen had the crows rolling on the floor in laughter.



Dr. Wyane Hanna accepts the USGA Green Section Award.



David Feherty rocked a packed house at the General Session and was worth the price of the show by himself.



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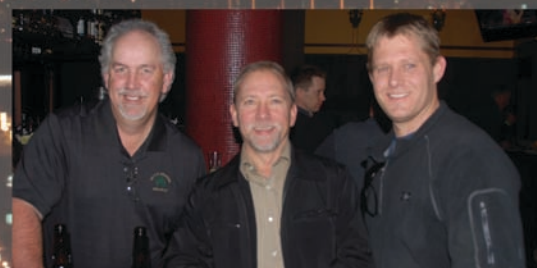
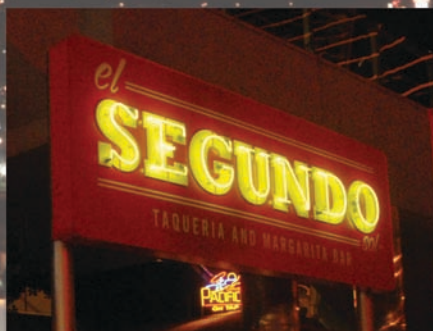
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Coming from a state where smoking is banned in public businesses the smell of smoke caught your attention right away and hung with you throughout the week. I don't care for the smell myself but if smoking allows you to enjoy losing at the craps table it is fine with me.

Celebrate GCSAA formerly known as the opening session has a reputation for having dry moments as they go through introductions and speeches but overall it was a fast moving good event made great by a \$1,000,000,000 donation to the Environmental Institute For Golf and Peter Jacobsen's acceptance of the Old Tom Morris Award.

Kendrick Melrose former CEO of the Toro Company gave the millions dollar donation through his families foundation in a very gracious and appreciative speech. His appreciation for the golf course superintendent as a professional was clear as he talked. The donation will go to support costs associated with attending Golf Industry Show for those who cannot afford it when their clubs do not support it.

Dr. Peter Dernoeden was awarded the Colonel John Morley Distinguished Service Award Presentation for his many

years of service to the industry. Denroeden has served the University of Maryland for 31 years as a educator and researcher.

It has been 14 years since Peter Jacobsen was the keynote speaker at the Anaheim Conference and I still listen to the cassette tapes of that talk I bought at least once a year. Technology has changed a lot in 14 years and cars do not come with tape players anymore but Peter Jacobsen has not changed his style and love for the game a bit.

He had the crowd laughing as he told stories of life and the tour but he also gave us a better appreciation for our profession and the game of golf overall. He has a close insight into our industry as he worked on the grounds department at Waverly Country Club in Portland, Oregon as a teenager along with his brother David who is still in the business.

Peter discussed how he learned life lessons by playing golf with his dad and how the game has given him everything he has.

I am sure if there was a club manager in attendance Peter may have offended them just as he did in 1998 but it was in good fun and they will get over it again.

I was able to get Peter to sign my CD case for Jake Trout and the Flounders single *I Love To Play* so my trip was complete.

The second big name of the week was David Feherty who spoke at Thursdays General Session. "Worth The Price of Admission" is how Monroe Miller described Feherty's talk as we walked out and he was right. I laughed until I cried and when he discussed his work with wounded soldiers through the Troops First Foundation I was filled with pride and appreciation for the sacrifices our troops do for us.

Feherty went a little long on time and I am sure appointments were missed as the crowd enjoyed stories from the David's time on tour as a player and broadcaster.

Like Jacobsen and many tour players Feherty got his start working on a grounds crew and hanging around the maintenance building at the local Bangor Golf Club in Northern Ireland.

With wit and a expansive use of words Feherty touched on his childhood, life on tour and in TV along with politics, war, his battle with alcohol and depression.

There are a few clips from both talks on the GCSAA website for you to relive the fun or for those of you who did not attend to see what you missed and regret your decision!

The final opportunity for rubbernecking was at the Annual Prayer Breakfast with New York Giants Super Bowl star David Tyree. Tyree helped the Giants win Super Bowl 42 with a amazing catch on his helmet with 39 seconds left in the game.

Tyree discussed his life and faith while inspiring those in attendance to look deep into their own lives. The Prayer Breakfast is always early and sometimes hard to find but well worth the effort as the speakers have been inspirational over the years.

The speakers are great and the trade show can be a incredible resource but the real benefit of the Golf Industry Show is the GCSAA Educational Conference.

The for 118 for-pay seminars are great and varied in topics but the free and included sessions are incredible.

I didn't take a for-pay seminar this year but ended up with a bunch of notes and valuable take home ideas from the other sessions and will try to provide a little insight.



Bruce Worzella, CGCS West Bend Country Club is congratulated for 25 years of certification and renewing 5 times.

Monday started with **What the Tech? Technology Solutions for Your Turf.** The three person panel discussed social media, valuable mobile “apps” for phones and software available. The take-home messages were 63% of recruiters check social media while selecting candidates for interviews and 99% of the time will hurt you.

Be sure to use your privacy settings and keep your social life completely separate from your work life. Linked-In is the “mothership” of business social networking.

For applications besides the normal e-mail, calendars and all important weather “Evernote” is a valuable tool for online storage of all your records to allow them to be accessed from anywhere.

Managing Your Equipment Fleet In A Tough Economy provided some great tips on how to research aftermarket parts to save substantial dollars as well as a formula to determine if leasing or buying a piece of equipment is best for your club.

Agronomic Solutions 1: Disease and Weed Control from South to North offered a panel of 6 university professors including a last minute addition of our very own Dr. Jim Kerns who was in the audience and asked to join. The professors gave a brief review of current research projects and then the floor was opened up to questions from the audience. The information was varied and valuable especially when the professors debated among themselves.

Monday finished with **Keeping Your Facility Above Water: How Water Quality Regulations May Affect The Golf Business.** Moderated by Greg Lyman, Director of Environmental Programs for GCSAA the speakers included Larry Gilhuly, USGA Green Section, Mary Hartney, Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical Association, Peter McDonough, Golf Course Superintendent at The Keswick Hall and Club Virginia, Chava McKeel Senior Manager for Information and Public Policy, GCSAA and Brian Horgan, University of Minnesota.

Chava discussed the clean water act and how golf is a easy target by perception even though the properties are professionally managed. Agriculture is often exempt but golf and landscape is “low hanging fruit”.

Dr. Horgan is a great speaker and interesting on any topic. He discussed Minne-

sota’s leadership in phosphorus reductions and eliminations over the past 30 years and how turf has survived and should into the future. Research has shown turf can do well with lower levels of phosphorus than we were taught for years.

Brian did ruffle a few feathers when we discussed how even though golf is a small contributor to the overall problem especially when compared to agriculture; we are a contributor and need to find a way to keep our nutrients and water from leaving our properties.

Peter discusses the politics of water in Virginia and their work with Best Management Practices and how they have developed relationships with the government. Larry discussed the politics of water in Oregon where 1/3 of the state is on the coast and very regulatory and 2/3 is in the plains. To round out the talk Mary discussed the challenge of working in Florida

Tuesday started with **Innovative Superintendents: Save Time and Money and Stress... Call Your Architect.** Discussion centered around the value of using a master plan and architect to help sell projects to the membership and provide liability protection. Since every member is an owner using a architect gives the superintendent a buffer down the road when projects are not what some members wanted. Examples were given from projects at the

Army Navy Country Club in Virginia and High Ridge Country Club in Florida.

Best Management Practices for Turfgrass Anthracnose: A Comprehensive Research Summary may have been the most in depth information of the week. The panel included the leading experts in turf pathology, Dr. Bruce Clarke, Rutgers, Dr. John Inguagiato, Connecticut, Dr. James Murphy, Rutgers, Lane Tredway, formerly with North Carolina and now with Sygenta. The talks were moderated by Dr. Frank Wong.

Anthracnose has become a serious and expensive problem for many golf courses as we have stressed the turf to offer better conditions for the golfer. Chemical options were discussed but great improvements have been seen with cultural changes.

Rolling more and mowing less, frequent topdressing to lower the crown in the profile, irrigate enough to avoid drought stress and proper fertilizer timing and amounts will reduce or eliminate problems with anthracnose.

On healthy turf no increase was seen from verticutting, spiking or from growth regulators.

I spent a few hours at the Chapter Editors Session to meet with and share ideas with other Chapter Editors and leaders. Brett Grams had been at the earlier Chapter Executives Session and stayed through the



The fun never stops in Vegas as even the airport has slots near every gate for that right off the plane gamble.

editors session with me.

My final stop for the day was at the **Environmental Institute for Golf: Funding Research, Education and Advocacy for You**. Moderated by GCSAA's Greg Lyman the session discussed methods to increase donations and support for turf research at a national and local level. Accountability is key to member involvement and to encourage future gifts.

Wednesday started with the Prayer Breakfast so I missed most of the **Turfgrass Talk Show** but heard from others Dr. Thomas Nikolai from Michigan State did a great job as moderator and questioner as the Dr., Doug Karcher, Arkansas, Michael Morris, Crystal Downs Country Club, Matthew Taylor, Royal Ponciana Golf Club and Rodney Tocco, Michigan State discussed wetting agents, their uses and results at length.

During the trade show GCSAA offers half hour sessions in a couple different areas to continue the education and allow people to sit down for a couple minutes.

First up was the rock star of turf Dr. Frank Rossi, Cornell and formerly of Wisconsin discussing **Smart Reductions in Fertilizer and Pesticide Use**.

Frank suggests to become sustainable for the long haul golf courses can and should

reduce nitrogen and potassium use. Potassium is not needed in the amount we think it needs to be and soil tests do not do a good job telling us how much K is left in the soil. Older stands of turf can obtain supplemental amounts of nitrogen from organic matter breaking down in the soil.

Next up was our current star Dr. Jim Kerns with **Are Pythium Diseases of Turf Created Equal? Linking Terminology with Management**. Dr. Kerns discussed pythium root rot in comparison to pythium root dysfunction, the treatments and proper timing and rates. A consistent use of phosphite products is showing promise not as a cure but to allow the plant to give protection.

The key to treatment is to get a distinction what type of pythium you have.

I also sat in on talks on golf shop merchandising, tee it forward programs to promote increased play and Pellucids State of the Industry in-between walking the show floor. In a nutshell white drivers and long putters are saving the golf shop industry right now, golfers like shorter courses and rounds decreased 2% again in 2011.

Wednesday morning started with David Feherty and during the trade show I attended sessions on fairway topdressing

programs, rolling greens for health and new turf varieties.

I attended the PGA's special Golf 2.0 weakly attended session. On the good news the GCSAA members did outnumber the NGCOA members but at most there were 20 people in learning about a program that is supposed to help save the industry. The key is we have to make golf fun for more people while keeping the tradition of the game. There will always be those who enjoy the challenge of the game but most players want a to score and not lose 20 golf balls in 18 holes.

Friday started with **Recognition of a Classic: The Restoration of Pinehurst No. 2**. Golfweek's Bradley Klein moderated this session with architect Bill Coore, USGA Executive Director Mike Davis and Robert Farren superintendent at Pinehurst. The group discussed the 2.5 million dollar restoration to the classic course while reducing the amount of agronomic inputs that will need to be used in the future with new grass on greens and less overall acreage of turf. The course will host back to back men's and women's US Open Championships in 2014.

Improving Your Golf Course Management Odds was hosted by the USGA Green Section and is a annual favorite for attendees. Many of these sessions will be highlighted in upcoming Green Section Record e-mails so be sure to check them out.

The last session of the conference was **Water, Water: Planning for Drought or Limited Supplies**. Hosted by the Irrigation Association the speakers gave insight into water restrictions and how to make the most of what we have. Water may seem plentiful and golf courses use much less of it than other industries but we are one drought away from a crises.

That wraps up my recap from a great conference. I was glad to see Wisconsin members at every session I attended and Todd Blankenship would receive the award for the most attended with Jerry Kershasky not far behind despite trading his turf hat for a salesman's.

Next year the show moves to San Diego and provides a great opportunity to mix business with pleasure.



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