

Best Freebie. Jacobsen hat wins by a mile-wide margin. Great color, great fabric, beautiful stitching and show design. It is a pleasure to make this the 21st in my string of Jake show hats. Thanks to them for their generosity.

Turnaround Award. Given to John Deere. Don Henderson and his engineering staff at Horicon have really turned around the JD line of grass machinery. Five years ago their booth displayed equipment made by others and painted JD green and yellow. They must have figured out it takes more than a coat of paint with the right colors to get people to buy from them. Most of us were not fooled!

I really spent a lot of time there this year. John Deere tractors have always been excellent. Now, the rest of their turf line is really shaping up. I was impressed by the look of their lightweight fiveplex, designed to compete with the LF-100 and the 5100D. It will be for sale in a year—they also have learned the value of field testing. With a couple of small changes, it should be a big winner.

When they solve their distribution confusion, they will be set for success.

Best Night Spot. Cowboy Boogie Co., located a few blocks from the convention center. I wasn't there, but lots of guys were. When I hear an Easterner say, "I could get used to boots and a cowboy hat," I have to believe it's a pretty good place to relax.

It Was Good To See: Stan Zontek, Ralph Nictora, Randy Kane, Jeff Nus, Don Hearn, Charlie Cross, Ron Milenski, Jim Moore, Clay Loyd, Jack Sullivan, Peter Salinetti, the Bell Boys, Peter Cookingham, Tony Grosso, Paul Sabino, Tuck and Becky Tate, Jim Gilligan, all of my chapter editor friends (some of whom I'd never met despite phone calls and letters, especially Pat Finlan and Dave Finney). Plus, I was glad to get to meet Dean Knuth.

For The Rubber Necks: Ben Crenshaw, Patty Berg, Dinah Shore, Beach Boys, Garth Brooks (seen by some at the Cowboy Boogie Co.), Robert Trent Jones, Jerry Pate, Howard Metzenbaum, Spanky (for the second year).

Quotable Quotes:

"Golf course superintendents are the catchers of golf."

—Johnny Bench

"Golf is no environmental problem; it is an environmental answer."

—Robert Trent Jones II

"Do I want what I can see or do I want what I can afford?"

—Jerry Pate

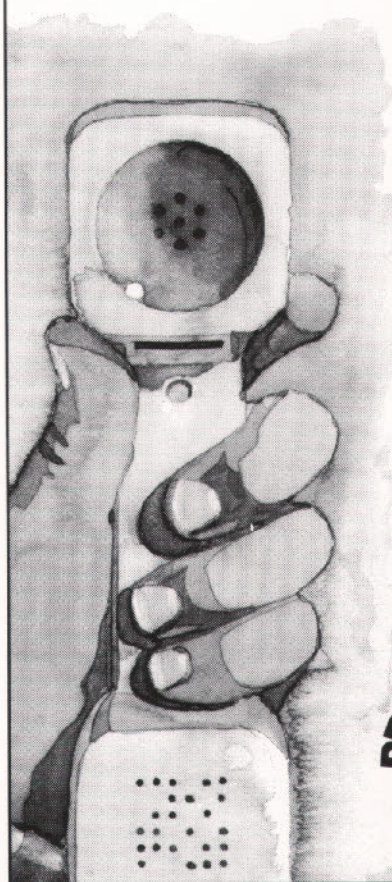
"I feel like I'm following Billy Graham on his best day!" Dinah Shore, referring to her introduction by Patty Berg. "I've never heard anyone say, 'There's this tennis court in Scotland that you've got to see.'"

—Dinah Shore

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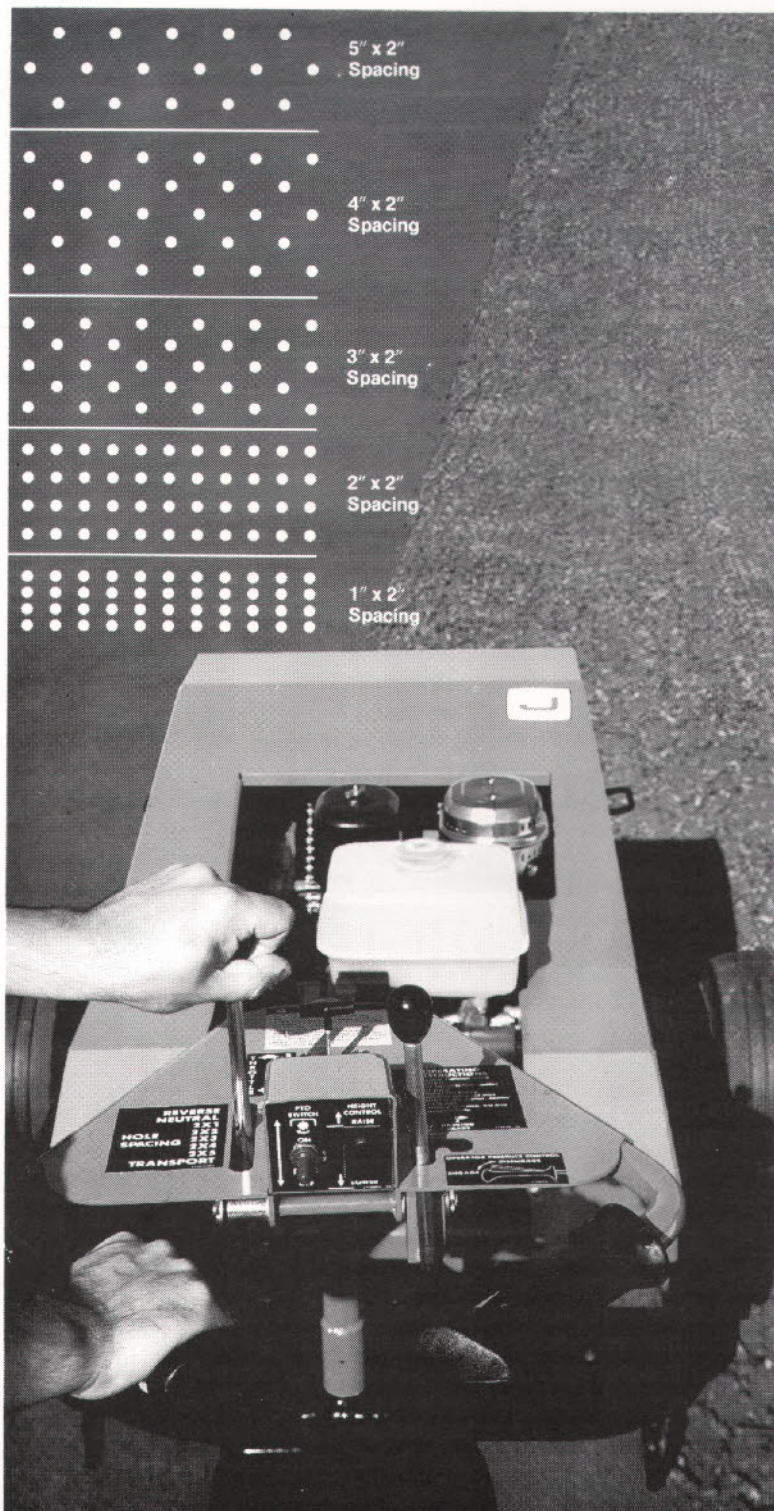
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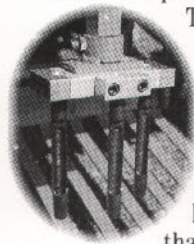
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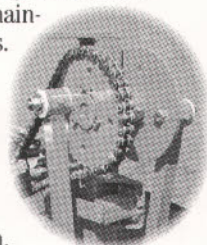
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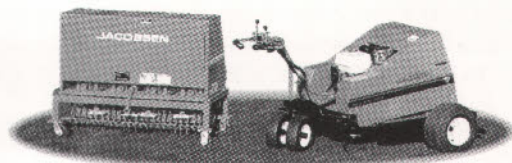
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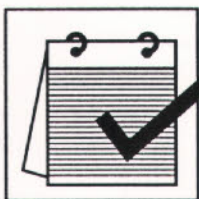
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CUTTING CUPS

By Monroe S. Miller

Cutting cups isn't something Wisconsin golf course superintendents normally think about in February or March.

Maybe the reason I came up with the following questions about cutting cups is a subconscious pining for spring.

The conscious reason, however, is my personal belief that pin placement and cup cutting might be the most important thing we do, day in and day out.

A well cut cup, placed according to rules and guidelines (USGA and local) speak volumes. All good golf course superintendents handle this fairly straight forward job properly.

I know that we are pretty fussy about the task at our golf course. Employees new to this job are given good training on what is expected of them. No excuses for sloppy execution are accepted.

Some employees loath this task, and for the life of me I cannot figure out why. Over the years, I am sure, some have intentionally done poor work just to be relieved of it. What they don't know is that the reassignment WILL be a miserable job.

One year we had a fellow who only cut 8 of the 9 cups he was responsible for, skipping a different one each day!

The questions here were asked at the Wisconsin/Milorganite Hospitality room in the Marriott on Friday, January 29th. I did catch a few other WGCSA members elsewhere during the week. There were so many members at the hotel I felt like a bee in honey. So many WGCSA people in one place at the same time. Surveying is an easy task in such circumstances.

I discovered, almost immediately, that there are as many different approaches to this job as there are people surveyed, none obviously better than another.

Rather, different techniques reflected differences in superintendents, their golf courses and the golf audience served by them.

For your edification, here are the results of the cup cutting survey.

1. How often do you cut new cups on your golf course greens?
 - a. three times a week 1
 - b. four times a week 6
 - c. five times a week 3
 - d. six times a week 15
 - e. every day 15

The six days a week category almost exclusively included those who move pins every day but Monday.

2. What type of cutting implement do you use?
 - a. lever action 34
 - b. foot action 4
 - c. hammer action 2

3. What kind of pattern do you use—random or repeated?
 - a. random 25
 - b. repeated 15

4. Who decides the specific placement site (other than for tournaments)?
 - a. golf course superintendent 2
 - b. assistant gcs 3
 - c. green committee chairman 1
 - d. cup cutter 34

5. What method do you use for actual cutting?
 - a. one-cut 3
 - b. two-cut 32
 - c. three-cut 5

6. Do you topdress the plug?
 - a. yes 12
 - b. no 28

7. Do you water the plug?
 - a. yes 24
 - b. no 16

8. Who actually cuts the cups?
 - a. golf course superintendent 1
 - b. assistant gcs 13
 - c. permanent cup cutter 10
 - d. qualified, trained crew members 17

9. How many holes does each person cut?
 - a. 27 holes 1
 - b. 18 holes 25
 - c. 9 holes 13
 - d. 3 holes 1

10. Do other responsibilities of the cup cutter include:
 - a. moving tee blocks? 29
 - b. checking ballwashers? 27
 - c. servicing shelters? 18
 - d. emptying course trash containers? 26
 - e. repair ball marks? 4
 - f. taking care of water coolers? 11

How many would like to meet the three guys who get the hole cut with a single shot? They must be gorillas! 🦍

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Is the USGA "Two-Faced" When it Comes to Course Maintenance?

By James F. Moore, Director
USGA Green Section
Mid-Continent Region

Editor's Note: Those who were in attendance at last fall's Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium are well aware of Jim Moore. He opened that educational session with some frank comments about our industry. In a similar honest and open style, Jim tackles the issues of green speed and tournament conditions and player expectations. His article was inspired by the appearance of the putting greens last year at Pebble Beach during the U.S. Open.

This article appeared in the September 1992 issue of *Mid-Continent News* and is reproduced here with permission of the editor—Jim Moore!

For those of you who do not frequent Turfbyte (an electronic bulletin board for golf course superintendents lucky enough to have PC's equipped with modems), there has been a fair amount of lively discussion lately concerning the condition of Pebble Beach's greens during the U.S. Open Championship. Since Turfbyte regulars are predominantly superintendents, the discussion centered around the turf conditions and the obvious stress on the greens during the last few days of the Championship. The USGA was the target of some pretty stinging criticism, the most serious of which in my mind was the feeling that we (the USGA) are "two-faced" in our recommendations to clubs across the country. The argument was basically, how can the Green Section agronomists visit clubs and emphasize the need to avoid excessively low mowing to produce extremely fast greens, and then hold the Open Championship on television with exactly those conditions on display for the whole world to see..

Having been a superintendent at one time and having worked at a club

where green speed was a frequent issue, I fully understand the argument these guys are making. It is a pain when a championship the caliber of an Open is on TV and the low handicappers in your club all decide they ought to putt on greens just as fast. (Actually, The Masters was always my biggest headache since it took place at a time of the year my course was trying to recover from whatever winter damage had been suffered. I didn't even know the superintendent at Augusta National but I sure hated the guy who prepared a course that was "perfect" and on TV while the greenest thing on my course was the *Poa annua* that I missed with the spray rig that winter.) It is a difficult situation when players at the local club think they ought to be playing on the same conditions they see on TV.

Generally, the superintendents on Turfbyte agreed that efforts should be made to let non-superintendents know more about what goes on behind the scenes and why, what is seen on TV, is not "the real world." I happen to agree with them and feel at least three major issues deserve discussion in this regard.

ISSUE #1

"Why does the USGA make the course so hard, the greens so fast, the rough so high? Why are they trying to embarrass the players?" Chances are you've heard these questions although they were probably expressed more as accusations.

I can't say I have been around a lot of championships in my eight years in the USGA. However, I have been to a few and know many of the people responsible for conducting the events. My observations are that the single most important goal of a USGA championship has in every case been to identify the best player. Do people

really believe there are secret meetings behind USGA doors where staffers decide to embarrass somebody? I think it is possible that the USGA feels more strongly than others that par is still a great round of golf.

On of the best analogies (I love analogies) I have heard concerning the Open setup is comparing this national golf championship to the country's auto racing championship—the Indianapolis 500. Can you imagine a 500 where there was a speed limit of 55 mph? Would you be able to find out who the best driver was under such limitations?

ISSUE #2

Non-championship golfers think they want championship conditions.

It is understandable that players want the same conditions they see on TV. After all, they emulate every other aspect of the best players including their clubs, shoes, swing, and style of shirt. However, there are some very large assumptions made when this emulation is carried on to course setup. Average and even above average players simply do not have the skills of those they see on TV.

Again, analogies are useful in this discussion. These players might point out that when they play tennis, or football, or bowl, or even shoot pool, they are playing on the same conditions as the professionals in those sports so why not golf? My rationale is that these are what I like to call "linear" sports. The playing "fields" are based on rigid, angular lines that remain constant throughout the game, from day to day, from place to place. These are two dimensional sports—one being physical skill and the other mental. The playing "fields" have only a limited influence on the player's success or failure.

(Continued on page 37)

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(Continued from page 35)

In my eyes golf is a "non-linear", three dimensional game. Rigid, angular lines have no place in golf. Contoured fairways, flowing bunkers, and undulated greens are viewed by virtually all golfers as more attractive and desirable than fairways that look like runways or hotdogs, perfectly round bunkers, and flat greens. Most importantly, in addition to the mental and physical aspects of the game, golf adds a third dimension—the course itself. **And in the case of golf, the playing "field" is equally as influential on the outcome as the other two aspects.**

All this leads to an obvious conclusion. A course should be set up commensurate with the skills of those who are to play it. In a USGA championship, the players are all exceptionally skilled and the course can and should be set up appropriately. However, daily play on courses will involve players from one end of the talent spectrum to the other. A middle ground must be established so that everyone can find something they enjoy. Let's all

face facts here. Few if any players at the club level play as well as the folks they see on TV. They may think they want the same conditions, but they would quickly find they are not up to the challenge. You know those flatbellies that sit in the 19th hole and watch the pros putt on greens with speeds over 10 feet, and then think the greens at their course should be the same? I often wonder how they drive home after watching the Indy 500 on TV.

ISSUE #3

"Can we have championship conditions even if we want them?"

The next issue is one that I feel is perhaps the most crucial. Most superintendents realize that the conditions seen on TV during a major championship simply cannot be maintained for an extended period of time. Unfortunately, many players have virtually no knowledge of the steps necessary to produce such conditions. Starved greens, microscopic cutting heights, unlimited labor and equipment, and the course dried to the bone are not conditions that can be maintained for

more than a few days at a time in most climates. This is truly "Management On The Edge" (Refer to the Green Section Record article of July, 1987 by the same name). It takes months and years to prepare a course for a major championship. Often, the complete reconstruction of greens and tees, reshaping of fairways, and yes, even the removal of trees that have been allowed to ruin the architecture of a classic design, must be accomplished prior to the event. Attempting to maintain championship conditions on a daily basis would destroy most courses.

As the Green Section staff travels the country, we often find ourselves explaining these facts to those present on the tour of the course. We also frequently visit clubs that are "pushing" the course way too hard in an effort to provide championship conditions. As a result, we often make recommendations to raise cutting heights, fertilize more, and accept slower greens. These recommendations are in direct contrast to preparations for an Open. Is this "two-faced"? **No, it's just common sense.** ♣

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Mr. Monroe Miller, Editor
The Grass Roots
P.O. Box 5129
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Monroe:

Dr. Cookson's observations (Grass Roots, January/February 1993) on the greens at Pebble Beach during the 1992 U.S. Open were entirely correct, according to Tim Moraghan, the USGA Agronomist for Championships and superintendent Ed Miller. The wind problem was not unusual and was taken in stride by the golf course staff. Incidentally, the contract between the USGA and the organization hosting USGA Championships gives the host the right to protect the course, turf and all, during the event. That includes any irrigation thought necessary by the superintendent as well as stopping play to syringe greens.

I must, however, differ with other statements in the letter, specifically his opinion on having ultra-fast greens as a daily routine. Grass must have an adequate amount of leaf surface in order for photosynthesis to create the energy required for growth. The closer greens are mown, the less the surface area. Fortunately bentgrass, Poa annua and bermudagrass will tolerate defoliation to a surprising degree, but there is a limit to this when the other factors involved in high Stimp meter readings on a daily basis are considered.

It is one thing to have fast, firm greens for a week of Championship play—after two or three years of intensive preparation—and another to provide these conditions on a daily basis and without regard to uncontrollable weather, the condition of the soil, or the environment at the green site (shade, etc.). It is noteworthy that the Open is played in late June, usually on bentgrass. The date allows recovery from winter damage and is before high temperature stresses usually begin.

I know that many superintendents can and do produce these super conditions, but broad brush statements about all courses under any conditions are ill-advised simply because some operations do not have the growing conditions, finances, etc. necessary to avoid damage to the greens. Furthermore, not all golfers prefer fast greens (or closely mown fairways). Recently, frequent rolling operations have been added to close mowing to obtain greens even faster than fast and firmer than firm. This soil compaction puts even more stress on root systems already limited by defoliation. It is being postulated by some plant pathologists that "high speed stress" may be an indirect cause of the appearance of new disease problems. Remember that the bacterial blight of Toronto bentgrass did not kill the collars of the infected greens—only the closely mown putting surfaces. Today, "new" soil-borne diseases are taking their toll of green quality as well as the budgets of courses where green speed is everything.

The speed syndrome has been taken up by late afternoon golfers who resent the fact that as grass grows, a green slows. At the last Senior Open at Oakland Hills, Stimp meter readings at 6:30 a.m. were a consistent 10.5 feet, but at 5:30 p.m. they were 9.5 feet. What to do?

This letter was not intended to be this lengthy, but it is impossible to reply to broadsides without giving some abbreviated rationale behind the rebuttal. While some adequately financed superintendents live "on the edge," the less fortunate cannot, but their golfers do not know, or refuse to recognize, the difference.

Speed Kills!

Sincerely,
Jim Latham



Challenge the Future: Build Bridges and Grow

By Dr. Frank Rossi

By the time you "gaze" at this article the WTA conference and National GCSAA Show will be memories. Many of your thoughts will begin to focus on the information you have gathered in the "off season." As you ponder some new ideas this winter, mindful of the challenges ahead, think for a moment of the affect of education on your life. It may have been formal in a University classroom, continuing education at conferences, or informal around a superintendent's meeting.

The golf course superintendent is a rare breed among grounds maintenance personnel. The majority of superintendents have some type of college education or short course degree. Professionalism and camaraderie among superintendents are models for many horticulturists and are the ideal in the turfgrass industry. Throughout the country there are always key individuals like Monroe Miller and Tom Harrison in Wisconsin, Ted Woerle and Clarence Wolfrom in Michigan, and Ted Horton and Sherwood Moore in New York. A common denominator among these individuals is a passionate commitment to continuing education and strength through association.

Wisconsin is the 10th most active turf state in the country, based on a survey of maintenance expenditures, from 1985. This does not include the amount of manufacturing activity at Jacobsen, Toro, John Deere, Ransomes, Simplicity, etc. These numbers suggest that we live in the #1 most active turfgrass state in the country! It follows then that we have the potential to use this economic activity to aspire to high professional standards for the ENTIRE turfgrass industry. Here's your challenge.

I have attended turfgrass conferences for the last 3 years from Massachusetts to Montana. I can't believe that a state with the amount of turf activity, the professionalism of the superintendents, and the excitement I

sense when traveling, has a major turfgrass conference that attracts only 350 people. I know the symposium is the premier golf course educational event in the country, I know Reinders has been providing exceptional practical information for 22 years. Don't you think it's time our state provided a major turfgrass conference that provides for the educational, technical, economical, and social needs of the entire turfgrass industry in Wisconsin? Don't you think it's time Wisconsin leads the nation in educating the forgotten sectors of our industry, the school grounds, athletic fields, sod growers, landscapers, cemeteries, and yes lawn care?

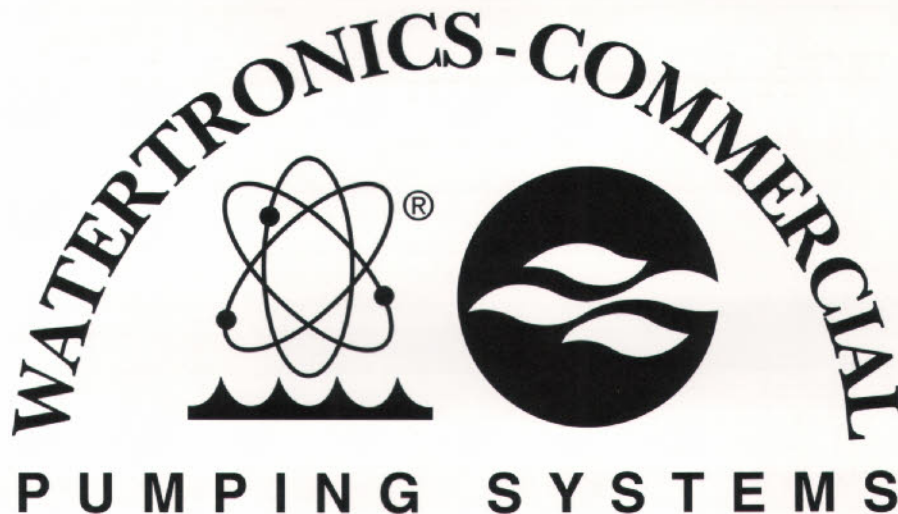
I submit to you that our lack of education in the above sectors, has created the tremendous perception and communication problem the turfgrass industry is facing with the general public. How often have you gone to your child's school and noticed the poor condition of the athletic fields? Have you ever asked the average lawn care applicator what they were applying, and they spoke in generalities without confidence? These scenarios have and will continue to have an impact on the golf turf management industry. We must make a commitment to challenge the future, and build bridges with our colleagues in the allied sectors of the turfgrass industry.

I know there are challenges to making a unified effort a reality. Economics is often the limiting factor; your town just can't afford proper maintenance of the field relative to its use. The cemetery can't afford to send its people to the conference. Yet, if we could demonstrate the impact of proper design, construction, establishment, and maintenance procedures on personal safety and overall well being, our biggest critics would become our staunchest supporters. I challenge you to reach out to the turf managers in

your community and build a coalition; a group that instills pride in our industry, committed to providing education to move this profession to the next level.

We need a major centralized state conference that draws from, and caters to the needs of the entire state, not just Madison and Milwaukee! Our conference should have an entire afternoon session devoted to ground's maintenance, an afternoon for athletic field managers, and an afternoon where golf course superintendents can listen to speakers from all over the country discuss cutting-edge technology on a variety of topics. Why shouldn't a state with the strongest turf equipment industry in the country have a trade show like the Detroit Auto Show, where manufacturers come from everywhere to show-off their latest wares and futuristic designs? Most importantly, we need a conference that provides some basic educational needs for the masses in our industry. I believe achieving this goal will ultimately improve the professional perception of our industry, and get the message to our colleagues and the public that we are *genuinely* concerned about the quality of our environment.

I came to Wisconsin because I sensed a great challenge in helping an industry grow. My responsibilities to the University are many and varied, from scholarly endeavors to educating our future horticulturists and serving on committees. Yet, my personal motivations are to nurture the heart and soul of an industry that, in one way or another, affects as many people as farmers. I need your help in reaching every corner of this industry and telling them that there is more to professionalism than wearing a jacket and tie. Just like in life, where success and professionalism are inside jobs, I challenge you to join me as we build bridges and grow our turfgrass industry. 🌱



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