

But talk about poor urban planning—International Drive reminded me of Odana Road in Madison, times ten. It is jammed with cars and people and fast food restaurants and it is impassable at times. Walking was the best way to navigate around. Who couldn't use the exercise during conference week, anyway?

I have never been to a GCSAA conference I didn't enjoy or benefit from. It is just that some are better than others. The 1996 edition was better than most. I am glad I went, and so are most I've visited with.

OBSERVATIONS AND OPINIONS

WINNER: Book signings. This is an entirely enjoyable experience at conference, for everybody, not just bibliophiles like me. It is fun to meet and visit with an author; it adds to the pleasure of reading his book.

LOSER: Corporate sponsorship. Maybe it is a sign of the times, but I loathe the whole concept of corporate sponsorship GCSAA is stuck on. I know—go to DisneyWorld and it is the FedEx Space Mountain. Turn on TV and it is the Kodak/Crysler/General Mills Classic Invitational Tourney. And go to conference and it is the Rainbird/Ciba/Jacobsen/Lebanon environmental session. It ought to be the GCSAA environmental session. The money goes for food and booze and treats for those there, even though GCSAA members not in Orlando pay and non-GCSAA members pay in the price adjustments made in sponsor products. It seems to me that if we can afford to be at conference, we can afford our own Miller Lite and BBQ chicken wings.

Think about it. If all the money spent on sponsorship went to a more legitimate purpose—research, for example—everybody would benefit. The purpose would be higher and more fair. For me, corporate sponsorship doesn't pass the smell test. It is ripe for abuse somewhere along the line. And somebody will abuse it. You wonder—what will be up for sponsorship next? How far will it go? How tempting might it become?

I don't feel enriched by corporate sponsorship, cannot sense that the conference experience is better for it, and wouldn't miss it for a minute. And it is not a great bargain for the sponsors. Pop quiz: who sponsored the President's Reception? What did Milorganite sponsor? See what I mean? I don't remember either. The

whole concept of putting the touch on businesses we deal with reminds me of lobbyists and politics. The polls make it pretty clear what the public thinks of those two areas of American life.

UPPER: Lou Holtz and his unscripted one hour inspirational talk to us. One of the best. Plus, I got him to sign my book he wrote—The Fighting Spirit.

DOWNER: By law changes that allow Mother GCSAA to take autonomy from state chapters that affiliate. It is about money and centralized power for a handful of politicians and bureaucrats. It is about excluding state golf course superintendents from their state chapter for unstated reasons. A void is going to be created by this legislation, and something will be found to fill the void, from state to state. It always happens, and in some states, there's a chance it will happen right away. Sad development in my mind.

WINNER: Florida weather at the end of the week and beyond. That is what makes Orlando so popular as a conference site. Loved those 80 degree F days!

LOSER: Florida weather at the beginning of the week. If I wanted to

be cold, I'd have voted for Milwaukee as a conference site.

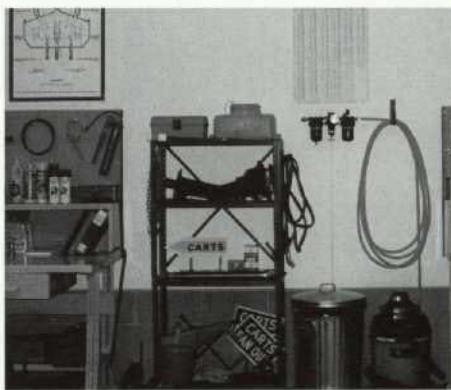
BIG WINNER: USGA Green Section meeting on Sunday afternoon. It was simply excellent. What a great way to spend your time at conference. Congratulations (and thanks!) to Jim Snow and his crew. Where in the world would the golf turf world be without these guys?

The best turf tips are always great; add in a vintage Jim Latham speech, an insightful hour with Dr. Paling and his theories on risk, and you had a first class program.

Some wondered how the timing might affect attendance. It didn't seem to hurt it at all.

BIG LOSER: The turf tour was well below past experiences and below what I expected. What didn't I like? Well, it left late for beginners. By mid-morning we were an hour behind schedule. A bus got stuck. I love looking at grass, but the garbage at Disney left me cold. It was nearly a waste of time. I would rather have visited Joel Jackson's place. The Scotts Research Farm was too far away, there was too much to see, and the bus ride back and forth wasted

(Continued on page 23)



The Ransomes display area included a shop area,



complete with all necessary amenities,

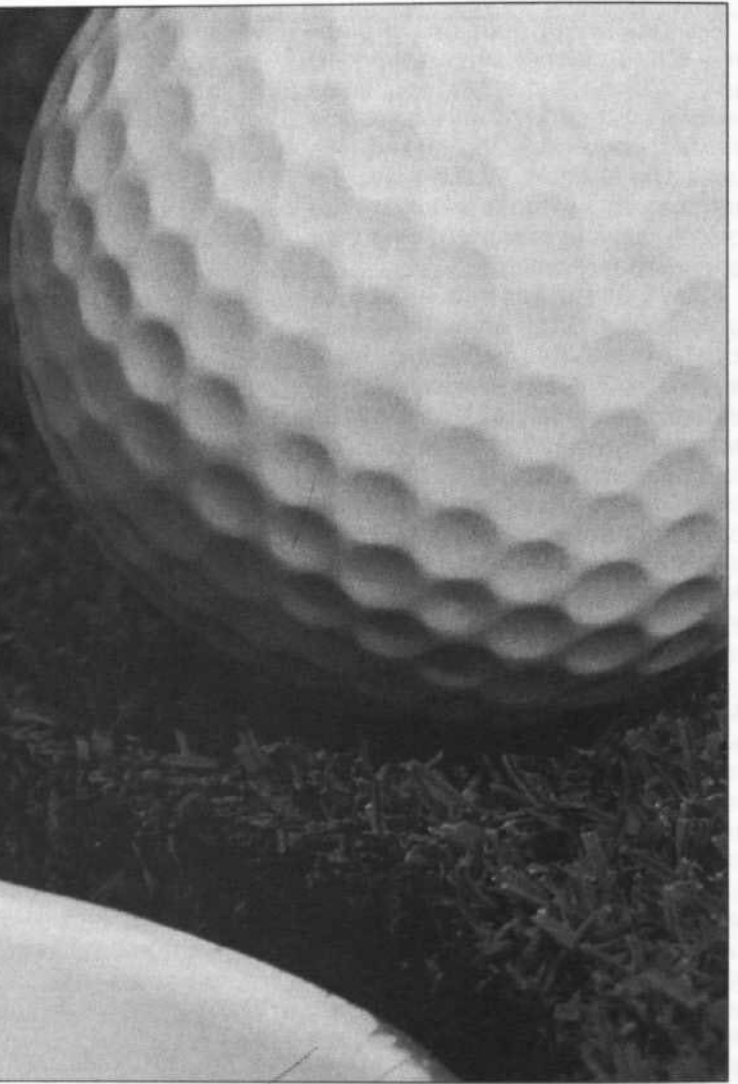


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(Continued from page 21)

valuable time that could have been spent at Grand Cypress or another of the great Disney courses or at Bay Hill or any number of others.

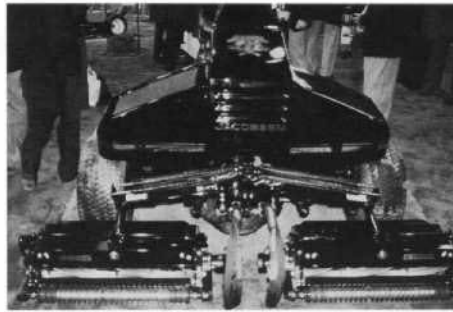
WINNER: Steve Millett. He won the Collegiate Turf Bowl competition! Wow—what an honor for one of our newest GRASS ROOTS authors. On Wisconsin!!

LOSER: Problems in seminar rooms. In one room, Dr. Houston Couch could not show slides because the lights wouldn't dim. Why isn't this checked out ahead of time? Why can't it be fixed? The building was big enough that there just had to be another room to use somewhere. I mean, we paid in full. That should include facilities that work. Or a rebate.

In Ron Forse's seminar, the microphone didn't work for the first hour and it wasn't until the half day seminar was almost over that the pointer light worked. For the money we pay and the time we invest and for the effort of the instructors, why aren't these simple problems solved? You cannot control the weather for the golf tournament, but it seems that somebody could make sure the lights dim.

SAY IT AIN'T SO: I overheard some guys talking while we were waiting for Lou Holtz to arrive (his tardiness was made tolerable by the tremendous message he brought) and they claimed negotiations were underway to secure O.J. Simpson for next year's opening session. The logic was his celebrity, his love of golf, his past athletic accomplishment and his speaking ability. Say it ain't so, somebody. Anybody. If it is true, I quit.

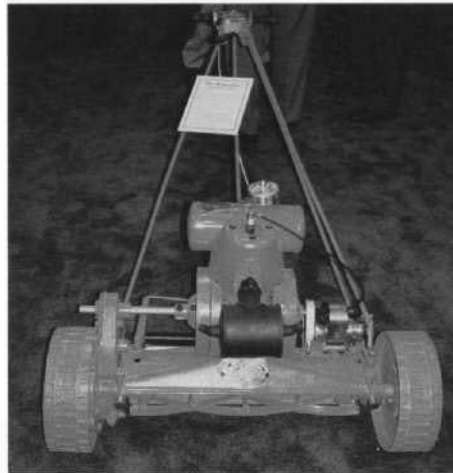
QUESTION: Does Randy Nichols' selection as DSA winner signal the start of a trend where each year we will now be honoring the immediate past president once removed? I hope not. My question isn't about Randy Nichols; I have no idea what kind of job he did as president or what his other contributions have been. I knew him least well—no, not at all, really—of the past dozen or so GCSAA presidents. He may have been a great one—I simply do not know. Why not do like Cooperstown and Canton—no eligibility for past presidents for five years after the last board meeting attended. Or until all of the board members served with have passed through office. It would make the award more meaningful to the recipient and to the members.



Jacobsen was celebrating its 75th anniversary, and showed the ultra-modern, black Tri-King...



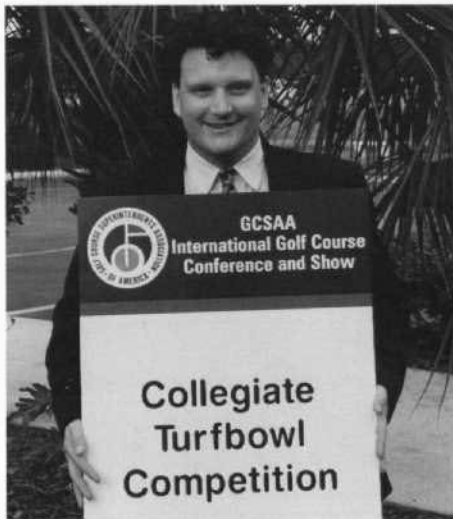
the first triplex greensmower from the late 1960s,



the very early 4-acre walking mower, and



a complete hat collection, going back five years beyond my first Jake hat! Super display!



Steve Millett, winner of the GCSAA Collegiate Turfbowl Competition. Congratulations to this proud Badger!



One of my favorite people of all time—Terry Ward. He's an all-American hero!



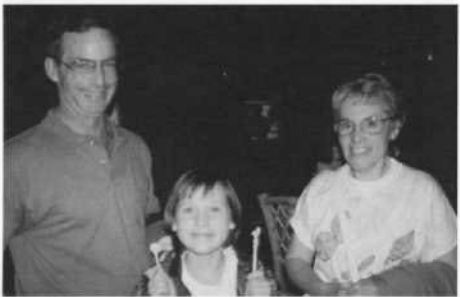
The turf tour visited Grand Cypress' shop, where we saw fuel storage and containment facilities second to none.



What's a trip to Orlando without a visit to Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club? When you are the boss, you can park your golf car anywhere you want!



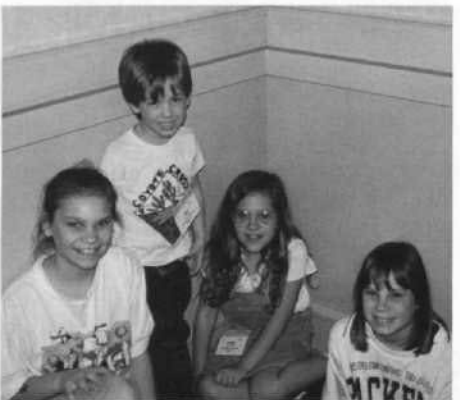
Oscar Peterson, Tom Parent and Mike Lee at the alumni gathering. Peterson and Lee were arguing the virtues of the Danes and Norwegians, respectively. Mick won easily.



The Parks Family—Jeff, Ginny and Linda.



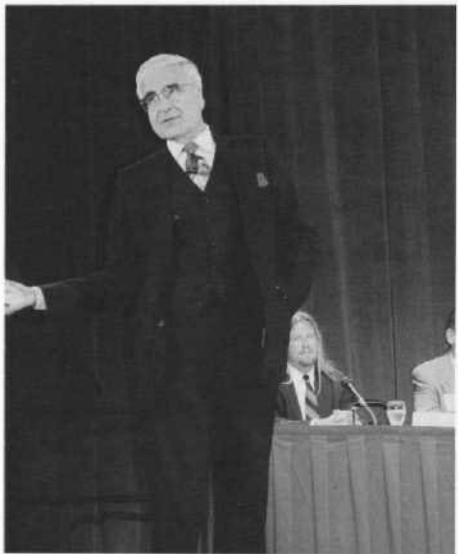
"Virtual reality" in the Toro irrigation booth!



A happy bunch—the Lange and Handrich kids. Joey Lange was exhausted from so much fun!



David Noltner got his copy of "The Fighting Spirit" signed by the author and our keynote speaker, Lou Holtz. Dave gave Holtz an update on Barry Alvarez!



Arthur Miller, well known from PBS appearances, moderated the environmental general session.



Lee Bruce made the trip to Orlando for business and the chance to see friends like JoAnn and Randy Smith.

UPPER: Frank Rossi had a big part in conference this year—chairman of the Northern Exposure Session, a member of the Environmental General Session, and a speaker in the Grow-in Pains program. Nice work.

HIGHLIGHT: The GRASS ROOTS won "best" in its category (size and volunteer editor). The award is particularly meaningful because it was done by peer judging—the other chapter publication editors made the winning selections. It is high compliment to our excellent writers, our outstanding artist, our super cartoonist, the staff at Kramer Printing, our advertisers who pay the bills and the business managers over the last year. Talk about teamwork!

BANQUET: I loved the family reunion theme. The food was excellent—best ever at the banquet. The entertainment wasn't what I would have selected, but you have to say they were loud. And give credit to the lead singer—at least he had a red and white guitar. Giddyup and yahoo, Bubba! Tom Fazio was just perfect as an Old Tom Morris award winner. Stroke of genius in selecting him.

On the negative side—the operatives at the head table have got to cut down on the hot air. It is time to resurrect the trap door suggestion: when the first word leaves the lips of a speaker, hit the stop watch. Anyone still talking at the 3:00 minute mark leaves the stage via a trap door. Another option—a good sized hook.

I know there is business to do and individuals to honor, but it goes on way too long. The sad thing about the long windedness is that the audience shuts it out. Watch sometime—after three minutes, people get restless and start talking with friends at their own table, paying no attention to head table activity. They simply quit listening.

Fortunately, what matters most is the company of good friends and the chance to relax and visit as we approach the eve of another season.

SPECIAL AWARD: Best Display at Show is a tough call this year. Two Wisconsin companies—Jacobsen and Ransomes—were neck and neck in the competition. Ransomes created a real life shop, complete with every detail. Jacobsen is celebrating its 75th anniversary and incorporated history highlights into the Orlando display. I loved both of them. In all honesty, I cannot select one better than the other. So these two wonderful companies earn a tie for giving us such enjoyable booths to visit. Thanks!

BEST EFFORT: I won't even pretend to be impartial here, but a good word goes to David Bishop. I have gotten to know him the past couple of years and he's earned my respect. The bookstore—at conference and through the mail—are his work. And if you took time to surf the net, you saw GCSAA on the worldwide web. That is Dave. So are the valuable info packs he's assembled. And a thousand other things.

I'm not sure how much practical day-to-day use many of us will make of the net, but we needed to be there. Nancee Torkelson does an excellent job with David in the wide-ranging responsibilities they have.

You may not have recognized him sans mustache. With it, he was headed to the NFL Hall of Fame as Dan Dierdorf's identical twin!

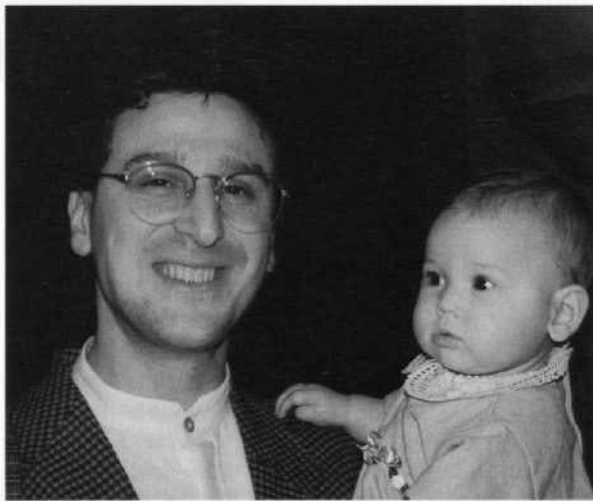
HOW DO I LOOK? Better than in past years, if you shopped the GCSAA merchandise store. I'm not much of a fashion plate or clothes horse (you'll never mistake me for a

golf pro—I still wear a belt and keep my collar folded down and I wear socks), but the shirts and jackets and other gear looked stylish and better than the boring early 1980's look of recent stores—you know, plain dark

blue shirt with a logo the size of a softball over the left chest pocket. They were suitable for wear while making an irrigation repair, but uptown they weren't. Somebody did a little looking around, and it showed. 🙄



Randy Smith, Steve Millett and Doug Maxwell relaxing in The Peabody Hotel.



Nicole Rossi is far better looking than her dad!



Mary Worzella and Lois Latham visited at the WGCSA reception.

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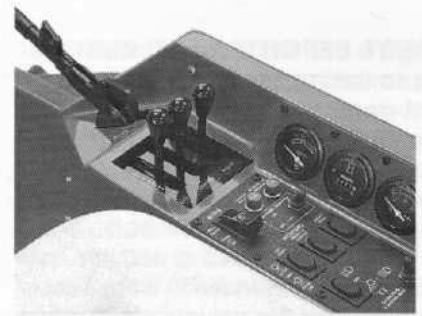


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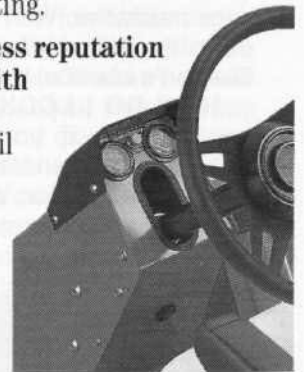


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Buyer Beware

By Steve Millett
 Department of Plant Pathology
 University of Wisconsin-Madison

The annual GCSAA meeting in Orlando was a mentally enriching experience. The education workshops, the seminars, the guest speakers, the social events, Houston Couch, Joe Vargas, the Turf Bowl, the conversations with old/new friends and the environmental session (which showcased an "Egghead" from Cornholio University) were all highlights.

The trade show stood out as well. It alone could have kept one interested for several days. I was amazed at the number of new biologicals that were being promoted as disease management tools. I define "biologicals" as any product that contains organisms, food for organisms or stimulants that may in some way increase the performance of turfgrasses or the turfgrass environment to aid against disease. As Bob Hampton, president of the Wisconsin Better Business Bureau (1-800-273-1002), would say, "Buyer Beware." Superintendents need to learn more about new turfgrass disease management tools before they invest in them.

Some new turfgrass disease management products promise to be the magic potion that cures and prevents all turfgrass diseases. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. There are products made from fish oil, molasses, seaweed, composts, common soil organisms, natural by-products, etc., etc. Granted, there are some good products mixed in with these. Unfortunately, there are quack products in the marketplace and care should be taken to avoid being snookered. Superintendents must be able to separate the good from the bad. Don't assume that a product is good just because they are selling the product at the trade show. Buyer beware.

When talking to a vendor at a trade show, you should ask some basic questions. First of all, ask the vendors for a copy of the data that supports

their claims. Simply ask, "Where's the data?" This should eliminate the pretenders and the alchemists. If they don't have the data to support the claims of the product, don't buy it. If they do have data, find out who did the research and where it was done. Is the researcher respected by his/her peers? Ask other scientists and researchers if they have heard of the researcher and the institution or facility that conducted the research.

When inquiring about biologicals that contain beneficial organisms, ask, "What are the names of the microbes?" Here you want a Latin binomial of the organisms. Specifically, ask for the genus and species. Another good question to ask is, "What is the mode of action of this biological? Does the organism out-compete pathogens for food by direct competition or do the organisms attack plant pathogens?" If the vendor doesn't

know the mode of action of the biological, don't buy it.

One product that is a hot item these days contains a fungus called Trichoderma. The fungus Trichoderma has been rediscovered as a biological. Trichoderma is a common soil fungus that does attack plant pathogens. It is a hyperparasite, which is an organism that is parasitic on a parasite. Trichoderma is already present on your soil. It is ubiquitous. This fungus is not new to the world of plant pathology. It was touted years ago as a powerful tool in reducing plant disease. The fungus is currently being mixed with fertilizer. It didn't work well then and it is not going to work well now. Also, Trichoderma has also been linked with a rare and hard to diagnose lung disease. Just because the product is natural it doesn't mean that it can't hurt you. Buyer beware.

(Continued on page 29)



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(Continued from page 27)

There is much debate over which method should be used to increase the microbiological health of your root zone mix. Should you add organisms to the root zone environment or should you feed the ones that are already there? Research and experience have taught us that if you add a new organism to a root zone environment, it will most likely die off or be reduced to levels that have little or no efficacy on plant disease. On the other hand, if you start to feed and nurture the root zone organisms that are already present you may be feeding pathogens as well as beneficial organisms. Both approaches have benefits and drawbacks. Again, buyer beware.

Some biologicals work extremely well under laboratory conditions, but fail in the field. Lab experiments usually look at a small amount of factors when investigating the efficacy of biologicals. Unfortunately, when these biologicals are introduced to the environment they are often consumed by other organisms or starve to death and vanish from the system. The biologicals just can't survive harsh conditions presented by the real world. Biologicals can win at home in a petri dish, but they have a poor record under field conditions. It is important to read the information given to you by the biological vendor. Put more faith in field experiments than lab experiments. If the biological hasn't been tested under field conditions, don't buy it.

Testimonials are often used to sell products. They do have some value, but not as much as hard data. Hard data comes from research that has been repeated over several years and by different researchers across a wide range of turfgrass situations. Sometimes other superintendents will claim disease-free turfgrass due to the application of a certain biological.

Did these managers separate out other factors that could have influenced the health of the turfgrass? Was fertility a hidden factor? What turfgrass quality was rated? Is that person qualified to give such an appraisal? Ask the person giving the testimonial about his educational background and experience. Put more weight on a person with a four year degree or higher. Who does the person work for? What does this person have to gain? These are some key questions to ask of the person giving the testimonial.

Another vendor strategy that is commonly used is the "Mr. Gift" technique. Vendor gifts can be successfully used to distract customers from asking tough questions. Avoid being softened by these gimmies. Besides, how much junk do you already have? Do you really need another water bottle or a coloring book? Everybody likes free stuff and the vendors utilize this inherent weakness in human beings to sell products. Look past the freebies and concentrate on the worth of the product.

However, not all gifts are moot. Breath mints are a valued gift because they save you from the embarrassment of that onion covered chili dog you ate for lunch. Yes, stinky breath is a common trade show ailment and you should always keep a roll of mints in your pocket. Nobody likes talking to a person with dog breath!

Let's say you asked all the tough questions and received a stack of data supporting the claims of the biological. Take the information home and read it and ponder it over for several days. Ask the experts at the O.J. Noer Facility at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and elsewhere about the worth of the product that you are interested in buying. Don't make an impulse purchase. Vendors can tempt you with a discount at the show, but unless you have researched the product beforehand, I advise delaying the decision.

One plan of attack would be to order a small amount of the biological and conduct a do-it-yourself field experiment. Setting up and conducting a field experiment can be laborious and tedious, but also educational and fun. There are some important steps that you must take if you are going to dabble in research. First of all, you must create a question to try and answer. This question is called the hypothesis. A hypothesis example would be: "Does the application of this biological reduce the amount of dollar spot on fairway #9?" There must be a control treatment. The control treatment is the standard with which you will assess the worth of the biological. There must be at least four equal replicates for each treatment and control. The experimental area must be uniform across all of the treatments and the experiment must be conducted over several seasons with differing maintenance levels. The disease ratings should be taken routinely until the disease subsides. Take the four differ-

ent ratings of each replicate and average them together. Also, record the range of the ratings at each rating date. There are many statistical methods that can be used to analyze the raw data but an average and range are some simple and quick methods that anyone can calculate. A simple scatter plot of the data points is a nice way to illustrate what happened. Sounds easy huh? Why don't you give it a try? Science is fun.

Today there are more turf products to choose from than ever before. Some products are worthless, yet others may eventually prove to be effective disease management tools. Superintendents need to learn more about new turfgrass disease management tools before they invest in them. Ask questions and expect the best before you buy. Don't be snowed by claims of miracle tonics or magical dusts. Listen carefully to what your peers are saying. Use your head and get as much information as possible. Take time to consider all of your options. You can do what you want, but please ask some tough questions before you make your decision. Maybe even dabble a bit in research. When cruising the trade show remember what our friend Bob Hampton always warns, "Buyer beware." (And carry some breath mints.)

Viva Las Vegas: Excuse me while I digress in this paragraph about a Wisconsin superintendent who has been using a unique technique to increase the microbial health of her/his root zone environment. The technique seems to be consistently successful as few diseases pitch tents on her/his greens. This innovator uses an 80-10-10 root zone mixture to topdress greens. There is something valuable in this tactic that needs to be investigated and documented. The topdressing is 80% sand, 10% peat and 10% composted aerification cores. This is a very innovative way to increase microbial health of your root zone environment. The idea is so good, in fact, that I believe she/he should be giving a seminar on it during the "Innovative Superintendent" session next year in Las Vegas. Wouldn't that be nice to see a Wisconsinite giving an "Innovative Superintendent Seminar"? Please let me know if anyone wants to present a seminar next year in Las Vegas because I can help you make your slides, etc. On Wisconsin! 🍷



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