

GCSAA, USGA Finding Ways To Work Together

By KIT BRADSHAW

(Editor's Note: This information from a press conference was held at GCSAA's Conference & Show in Las Vegas in February is reprinted from Showtime '97, a publication of GCSAA during the Conference & Show.)

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Judy Bell, president of the United States Golf Association, told the audience at Monday's press conference "I can't tell you how important golf course superintendents are to me. In our work with the GCSAA, we are of one mind when it comes to our direction."

Bell's sentiments were echoed by Bruce Williams, CGCS, president of GCSAA, who said, "We need to work together — the GCSAA, the USGA, the ASGCA."

Each of these organizations has its role in the golf industry, said Bell, with the USGA committed to educating and teaching people about the history of golf, the standards for equipment and the Rules of Golf. One of the most important missions of the USGA is in research, where 30 different projects are underway, with \$3 million contributed by the USGA for these projects.

"We strive to be good listeners," said Bell. "As part of our new turfgrass variety testing, we have allocated \$1 million to creating 15 greens around the country so that these grasses can be tested in the real world, in real playing conditions, with real golfers walking on them and playing on them."

"Sometimes our USGA specifications have gotten heat," added Bell, "and we are hoping that this varietal testing of grasses will be the proof of the pudding."

Williams commented that the USGA specification for greens construction is still the bible for the industry, and has been modified somewhat over the years. Golf course superintendents, he said, "respect the scientific studies done by the USGA in greens construction."

Despite the advances made by technology, Bell bemoaned the impact of technology on the game.

"I don't think golf should be perfect. We get so focused on the latest gadget in golf that we forget the most important thing is teeing it up and putting it into the hole. We should have challenge in our game. One of the charms of our game is that it isn't like basketball or football, where the field is the same. Our playing field is different every time we play"

Williams added that sometimes golf course superintendents can be their own worst enemies because they strive for perfection.

"Who says the challenge is greater on a fast green," said Bell. "If we have to judge weight and line, who says that this isn't more challenging to a golfer than reading a fast green."

Bell said that if she could have her way, she would like to see golf course superintendents have more identity so that more people would know what they do, and how unusual and creative their profession is. She would like them to be able to do their job as economically as possible, and golf course superintendents should use the technology to help maintain the simplicity of the game.

"Great golf courses are natural," she said, "not contrived."

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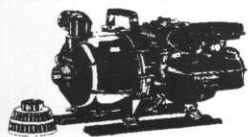
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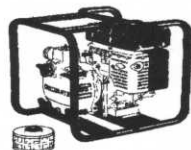
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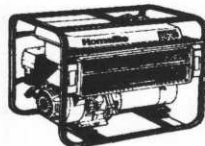


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