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## ATHLETIC TURF

### Are you professional?

We all talk about being professionals. Don Marshall, director of golf and stadium operations for the city of Anaheim, Calif., wonders how often professionalism is truly practiced in the athletic turf and golf industries.

Speaking at the New York State Turfgrass Association exposition in Rochester, N.Y., Marshall fired a few well-aimed salvos at what he thinks is a lack of true professionalism in the green industry.

According to Marshall, this deficit is caused by a number of trends:

- Product endorsements;
- So-called "consultants" who accept payment for imparting the most basic turf knowledge; and
- The bias that Marshall believes exists toward veteran turf professionals who have never received GCSAA certification or similar scholastic honors.

"My generation," explains Marshall, "has nothing upon which to hang our careers other than hard work applied to the best of our ability in a professional manner."

"Being high profile or putting out a great public relations spin will not create the professional," says Marshall. "Such may serve to hide a few inept ones for a while but it is not a solution to an image problem. In many ways it accentuates it."

Marshall admits that sports turf management is far from being an exact science. But regardless of all the degrees or permits a person might have, "you use your own knowledge base to make the best possible judgement, including asking for qualified help when you're indecisive. If you expand this knowledge base and exercise an honest work ethic, I say you make it as a professional."

Payment for consultation is wrong, asserts Marshall, "when the knowledge (the consultant is) imparting is so basic, it is in the public domain," and "when (the consultant is) using (his or her) position for personal gain rather than that of the employer."

"How many times have you run into a situation in which a consultant comes in and lists six pieces of equipment that are needed? Now it becomes important, and suddenly the equipment appears. But the poor super operating the place has asked for it for years," Marshall observes.

"There will always be a few of us who—by virtue of our coincidental successes and personalities—will become a head above of the rest in the public eye," concludes Marshall. "They shall be recognized as outstanding in their fields. The rest of us will be happiest by merely standing out in our fields."



Don Marshall