

## Educational Overkill?????

There has been much flak turned over lately concerning the wide range of educational vehicles riding the streets of the golf course superintendent's world. Indeed, the convention centers and other display areas for equipment and turf knowledge are crawling with shows, seminars and the like.

Such an outpouring has prompted some superintendents to suggest that perhaps the educational explosion has reached a saturation point and measures to cut back in offerings are in order.

One of the targets of the wipe out squad is the granddaddy of the green wave set, the National Turf Conference sponsored by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Even those call words are enough to stuff a hotel ballroom.

The question arises: Is the national conference a worthwhile opportunity for the superintendent to build on his professional expertise or is it just another gala week out on the town for those fortunate enough to grab the expense account brass ring back at their country clubs?

A reprint from the Chicago Bullsheat, written by Silver Lake super Dudley Smith, has worked the rounds of the profession's newsletter circuit. Mr. Smith pulls no punches in picturing the annual cross-country safari of turf managers etc. as an unscheduled circus where the expenses run as high as a fir tree's eye and the educational input usually winds up an exercise in repetition.

Although the national conference served as the eye of Mr. Smith's stormy rhetoric, he cited the winter educational route he had logged in and around the Chicago area. He jack-rabbit around to the tune of \$2,000 in travel costs and reported that few of his educational sightings were new to him.

Obviously, Mr. Smith must have an unlimited expense account. And, it follows that he might use a little of his own common sense in selecting his conference appearances. For instance, if the program is familiar to him, there is no educational gain in attending it again - unless he likes going to the same movie two or three times.

That winter experience of the man from Silver Lake is an example of overstating his personal case. However, it should not overshadow the impact of his original plea - that there are too many turf conferences and seminars being offered and a slim-down effort should be initiated to bring their number back to within reason.

The Smith idea of replacing the GCSAA big bash sound with regional productions bears merit and deserves future consideration.

In a nutshell, it breaks the country into four sections and forms a sort of mini-national conference in each, with the backing of the GCSAA to keep its hands in the turf educational pie.

These sessions would last just four rather than the present eight days at the big show. They would concentrate on local problems (regional in this case), be presented in cities closer to the home courses of the participants and streamline the program all the way down the line. The result would be a considerable reduction in expenses and a

guard against the weakest point of any such venture - boredom.

In New England, members of the golf course superintendent's profession are already blessed with that type of educational offering. The University of Massachusetts Turf Conference could have been the model for Mr. Smith's proposal. Certainly, it has most of the criteria for presenting an inexpensive, yet rewarding and compact opportunity for supers and other turf experts.

Of course, the UMass show could be expanded in manner of stretching its boundary lines to include the entire Northeast section of the country. This might call for engaging larger facilities but would still fall into the category of sensibility in overall size.

The possibility of educational overkill, as witness the growing number of so-called local seminars, is something for the superintendents to think about. The ideal situation would be elimination of some and a redirection of educational efforts and goals to the GCSAA chapter monthly meetings. Making them more attractive would touch all bases in bringing the burgeoning conference circuit under control.

As for the fate of the National Conference, don't bother to wonder. It already is booked through 1985 - naturally, in a "bigger and better" convention facility. Go there and get lost in the crowd.

Gerry Finn

### Next Meeting

November 2, 1981

The Presidents G.C.

Host Superintendent: Jim Fitzroy

9:00 Directors Meeting

10:00 Regular Meeting

Lunch on your own

Golf 11:30-12:30 Best selected 12 holes -

Individual - 100% Handicap

Buffet dinner following golf.

Directions: From Southeast expressway (rt. 3) northbound take East Milton exit. Continue straight to second set of lights. Turn right onto W. Squantum Street, club is on the left about ½ mile. From Southeast Expressway (rt. 3) southbound take exit 21S onto Granite Street to first set of lights. Turn left onto W. Squantum St.





## The Snowball Effect - It's Working

It had to happen sooner or later. Now, it's happening more often, almost as if it were on schedule.

The welcome additive to the growing recognition of the golf course superintendent is being heard and read just about every weekend of the PGA Tour circuit. The players are commenting on the condition of the course, the TV broadcasters and golf writers are relaying the messages back to their audiences and one big snowball effect is working like magic for the profession.

There was a time when the television booth failed to connect the two - the condition of the golf course and the superintendent. That was in its dark ages when commentators thanked everyone for their stay at the "Picture Perfect Country Club", everyone except the superintendent who was partly responsible for all those birdies and eagles the golfers and galleries lapped up.

However, the media is finally coming around. And much of the credit for its awareness of the super's input in a successful Tour tournament has to be given the players.

Case in point is the Sammy Davis, Jr. Greater Hartford Open which painted that city's wagon a successful, flashy red when the event was staged in August at the Wethersfield Country Club.

Wethersfield doesn't attract too many of the so-called big name players on tour because of its bandbox proportions. It is short and prone to taking beatings by so-called Tour lesser lights. Maybe this is why the big boys avoid it. It could be embarrassing if some no-name outshone a few of the game's future legends.

Anyway, the players on hand for this year's GHO loaded their birdie shooters and let loose with another exciting event. Hubert Green won with a record-tying 20-under-par 264 for 72 holes. Three hundred and thirty-four sub-par rounds give you some idea of Wethersfield's shortage of resistance. But - and this is important - a final day crowd of 33,000 proved that Wethersfield and "no-name" players are a good mix.

Before Green wrapped up his title and \$54,000 payoff, the field took considerable notice of the condition of the course and the man behind it - Fred Bachand.

The most common pat on the superintendent's back came in assessment of Wethersfield's greens. "They're the best greens we play on all summer," one player noted. The next day almost 300,000 readers of The Hartford Courant drank in that comment. Put 300,000 more in the super's corner.

The national exposure given certain golf courses, via the PGA Tour's extensive television package, actually has turned into a showcase for the golf course superintendent.

This is not to imply that every course the pros play is the epitome of flawless grooming and unquestionable playing state. On occasion there have been off-condition TV shots. However, they are the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, the Tour boys belly up to outstanding birdie layouts. And they are grateful for it.

"There's no question," Green said after his GHO triumph. "The condition of the fairways and greens has been largely responsible for most of the low scores at Wethersfield. When you don't have one imperfect lie and every green putts true, you have to say that the man preparing the course is doing everything right."

Such endorsements of the profession are becoming common along the professional playing route. They stand as another form of public education as to the cause and effect of the superintendent's presence and thrust in the game of golf. Finally, he is being given a prominent place in its makeup and increased acceptance of it can be traced to such Tour stops as Wethersfield.

They're talking up the superintendent's contribution and most of the talk is good. Now if only that snowball effect keeps rolling so that it hits the country club member where it counts - in his recognition of the super who keeps his playground grass green and true.

Gerry Finn

### 1982 Nominating Committee

Don Hearn - Chairman  
Tom Schofield, Nary Sperandio,  
Bert Frederick, Bob Mucciarone.

## Thought for the month

We accept, without thought, the existence of things whose absence would incredibly change our lives. Without grass, there would be vast and constant dust storms, erosion problems of tremendous magnitude, a rise of sea levels, a change of climatic and atmospheric conditions, the immediate demise of a half million species of animals, and the virtual destruction of agriculture and possibly, mankind.

Turfgrass represents a large, practical and aesthetic portion of the industry of grass. Those who have the good fortune to be caretakers of these humble plants, understand with both pride and reverence, the given responsibility.

The job of life springs from our heritage of the grasses of the earth.

HEART BEAT  
Heart of America GCSA  
May 1981

### CHRISTMAS PARTY

December 11, 1981  
Needham Golf Club

More info later



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# Going...Going... Gone

Ron Kirkman is rounding third base and heading for home.

The president of the New England Golf Course Superintendents Association is in the last few months of his two-year stay in office and anxious to see that an orderly change of command takes place at the beginning of the new year.

"According to precedent, Brian Cowan will be taking over in January," Kirkman advised the other day. "I'm sure that Brian will do a first-rate job. In our association over the past several years, Brian has been a tireless and effective contributor to the operation and improvement of the NEGCSA. He'll keep us moving, I'm sure."

Kirkman has been an active and attentive prexy. And, although he has been under fire on occasion, he comes out of the action unscathed and unbowed.

Being president has its up -- its downs.

"You're really on the spot in this job," he commented. "I've been button-holed by a number of members on certain issues and always tried to answer any and all questions. My problem is that I'm often opinionated and find it hard to restrain myself on voicing my views as a straight-out member, rather than the president. I can't take sides in these issues; I can only present each point of view."

With elections coming up, Kirkman reminds all regular members that this is the time to step forth and become visible in the operation of the association.

"I really think that we have a very active group of people," he expressed. "However, I'm still leery about those who state their opinions only when they are out of earshot of the whole membership. Informal discussion has its worth, but bringing it out in the open has far more value to our cause."

Therefore, Ron is making a plea to the "sidewalk" superintendents who advise and criticize in the sanctuary of their own group of friends or conversational sparring partners.

"The trouble with a few of our members is that they criticize at the wrong place and the wrong time," Kirkman chided those who keep their mouths zipped during formal discussion periods at monthly meetings. "I know that what we're doing isn't one hundred percent correct or perfect. However, we shouldn't be taken to task for it in private. It should be brought out into the open."

Kirkman invites those "snipers" and any and all members to become part of the operational force of the NEGCSA by voicing interest in holding office.

"Some members still insist that we make up a slate of officers and railroad it through," he remarked. "That's impossible in itself because very often we have to persuade people to have their names put on the ballot. Usually, we get good people, too."

"But it's probable that we overlook capable replacements and additions to our board. That's why I'm offering a personal invitation to anyone who feels he can contribute to the effectiveness and improvement of our organization."

## To be voted on:

Stephen Carey  
Royal Crest C.C., Walpole, Mass.

The outgoing president had this to say about the years ahead:

"I think that the profession is still being uplifted through a number of sources from within and without our association. Certainly, the Newsletter continues to hammer away at the golf world for more and deserving recognition of the golf course superintendent. That inspiration has carried over to many of our members who are spreading the word, too."

"So, it's up to all of us to improve our position in the golf establishment and we can do that by taking an active and official part in the association. Certainly, I've learned that this is the logical route to reaching our goals. Hopefully, more of us will assume the same approach."

Gerry Finn

## SATAN AND JOHN DOE

Old Satan sat with face so grim  
And muttered, "What'll I do with him?  
He's sure to find this place a bore  
With the life on earth he's had before!"  
And then while shaking his horny head,  
He opened his ledger and this he read:

"John Doe - Keeper of Greens,  
A man behind the golfing scenes  
Had 60 years of toil and strife  
Pleasing golfer, manager, pro and wife!

His job included keeping the greens,  
Planting new turf, repairing machines.  
Fighting diseases, insects, defeat,  
Battling rain, humidity, heat.

Fixing the water pipes that break thru the ground,  
Changing all markers and mowing weeds down.  
He worked all day - studied at night.  
Trained all new men  
In the ways that were right.

Knew the diseases; chemicals, too.  
Fertilized, aerified, 'till his face would turn blue.  
Not only a scholar and teacher was he,  
But an ambassador of good will and publicity.

Records he kept; watched budget allocation -  
On him depended the course reputation.  
And 'tho heading a project whose value was high,  
Credit and praise went to some other guy.

Gripping and moaning he got every day,  
But seldom a raise in the old take-home pay!"  
Now here he lies, his days they are thru -  
"Tell me," said Satan,  
"What hell can I put him to?"

After sitting and thinking for quite a while,  
His face broke out in a great big smile;  
The best known hardship he could deem  
Was to send him where all was calm and green!

Credit: HEART BEAT  
Heart of America GCSA

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# NEWSLETTER

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