

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

A SHOW FOR ALL SPORTS TURF MANAGERS



The big show for the American turf industry is right around the corner—the 59th Annual International Golf Course Conference and Show in Houston, TX, February 1-8. It's one of the top 50 shows held in this country every year, with more than 12,000 people attending.

Virtually every hotel within 30 miles of the George R. Brown Convention Center will be filled with golf course superintendents, grounds managers and suppliers from across the U.S. and around the world.

The Golf Show is a shining symbol of how the golf course maintenance industry has grown in the past 20 years. Nowhere else in this hemisphere can the superintendent and professional turf manager see the

assortment of equipment and supplies designed specifically for him. He can also take advantage of a wide array of seminars given by top experts from across the country.

The show makes two major statements. First of all, the industry has grown to a multi-billion dollar part of the U.S. economy. It is beginning to rival the television industry, the airlines industry, and even agriculture in its importance to the U.S. economy. You couldn't say that ten years ago.

But, to me, the show says the "greenskeeper" of the past has risen above the status of a specialized maintenance person. Today he is recognized as a manager of a very valuable resource. His salary exceeds the national average because he is the product manager of a business worth millions of dollars. Under his management the condition and playability of golf courses has reached new heights. The chemicals and equipment he uses are also more expensive and effective. The Golf Show, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), the university system and manufacturers have enabled progressive and ambitious superintendents to become professionals rather than tradesmen.

That's terrific for the golf course superintendent—but what is the show doing for the park superintendent, the grounds manager at schools and colleges and the stadium field manager? In many respects, these other important turf managers are where the superintendent was ten years ago. Why can't the Golf Show help them as it helped superintendents?

The reason I ask is that all managers of high-use, recreational turf in England share the benefits of another show, the Institute of Groundsmanship's Exhibition held every September in Windsor. This past year nearly 38,000 people attended this three-day show. On one day more than 16,000 grounds managers packed the show ground. Those who have attended this show have told me it caters to everyone in the turf and landscape industry, from the mower operator to the head groundsman. Golf course superintendents from some of the greatest courses in the world attend the show religiously to compare notes with their peers and talk with manufacturers about new products. In their hearts, they are groundsmen too.

I guess it boils down to how GCSAA members feel about their cousins in turf management. Now that hard work and recognition have placed them on a pedestal, do they feel a kinship with other managers of high-use, quality turf? If they do, are they willing to open up their show to other related organizations outside of golf? There apparently is some question by GCSAA board members as to whether the Sports Turf Managers Association should be part of its show. Is this doubt felt by most GCSAA members?

Just as important, are other sports turf management organizations willing to work with GCSAA? Does every organization have to have its own show? There are practical limitations for the associations, their members and the exhibitors that have to be considered with one, large industry show like the Institute of Groundsmanship. All parties will have to give up something to gain something in return.

The principle behind this magazine is for all managers of sports turf to share their knowledge. If one group makes strong advances, then it can and should help bring others up to speed by sharing its expertise. I think the same principle should apply to shows.

Brent F. Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JANUARY

19-21 28th Virginia Turfgrass Conference, Richmond Centre, Richmond, VA. Contact: J.R. Hall, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, (703) 961-5797.

FEBRUARY

1-8 59th International Golf Course Conference and Show, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, TX. Contact GCSAA, 1617 St. Andrews Drive, Lawrence, KS 66046, 1-800-GSA-SUPT.

6 Sports Turf Managers Association Conference, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, TX. Contact: Mary Giles, STMA, 400 N. Mountain Ave., Suite 301, Upland, CA 91786, (714) 981-9199.

9-10 Southern Grounds & Turf Maintenance Exposition, Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact: South Carolina State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, 111 Executive Center Dr., Columbia, SC, 29210, (803) 686-3737.

21-26 Pacific Northwest Maintenance Management School, Fort Worden State Park, Port Townsend, WA. Contact: National Recreation and Park Association Pacific Region Office, 1600 Sacramento Inn Way, Suite 217, Sacramento, CA 95815, (916) 646-9050.

23-25 Western Pennsylvania Conference & Trade Show, Pittsburgh Expo Mart, Monroeville, PA. Contact: Randall Zidik, Rolling Hills Country Club, 261 Center Church Rd., McMurray, PA 15317, (412) 941-8552.

23 Grounds Maintenance Short Course, Holiday Inn, Greenville, SC. Contact: George Hyams, South Carolina Landscape & Turfgrass Association, PO Box 12109, Charleston, SC 29412, (803) 762-1595.