

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

WANTED: LEADERS FOR THE NEW DECADE



I'd like to call your attention to the article in this issue about Harry Gill, Golf & Sports-TURF Magazine's Man of the Year. What you'll read is just a small part of the story. It's difficult to document 35 years of a person's life in a book, even harder in a magazine.

Harry is a motivator, an idea man, someone who looks at the big picture and then finds ways to improve it. He doesn't mince words. He is afraid of no one. He makes things happen. He is a leader.

Not long after he joined the Milwaukee Brewers, Gill made it clear to fellow groundskeepers, team owners, and players that the sports turf industry needed two things: an association and a magazine. In his mind, these were absolutely essential to improving the safety and quality of athletic fields in this country. Today the industry has both, due in part to his tireless urging.

Gill believes that those benefiting from sports played on turf should contribute in some way to the advancement of field construction and maintenance. His concern extends beyond professional sports to schools and parks, the training grounds of future professional athletes. He knows that justifying the cost of advanced construction and maintenance techniques is much harder at school and park levels than it is at the professional. He has personally experienced a similar situation between public and private golf courses. The needs are much the same, but the budgets are vastly different.

Gill has been an invaluable torchbearer for the industry during the past decade. As we enter the '90s, we will need many more like him. Gill and many of the groundskeepers who worked together to launch the sports turf market will be retiring in the next few years. It is essential that new leaders emerge to carry on in their footsteps. We need to cultivate bright, innovative people with the initiative to speak out, take risks, and devote a considerable amount of time and energy to helping others.

As Harry will attest, there is a price to pay. Leaders are often confronted with jealousy, resentment, and differences of opinion. It is dangerous and lonely being the point man for an industry before it is well established. There are days when you question whether the personal sacrifice is worth the risk of helping a young industry grow.

One aspect of Gill's career most accurately depicts a need the sports turf industry will face in this decade. It is the willingness of those who have prospered in the golf industry to share their energy and to make an equal commitment to the condition of athletic fields in this country. Golf must share the limelight and recognize sports turf managers as part of the team. We can't become so comfortable with a booming golf market that we ignore the tremendous need and potential of other types of sports turf. As Gill demonstrated, golf course superintendents can contribute tremendously to a young but promising sports turf industry. Start being a leader today.

Bruce F. Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JANUARY

15-18 Virginia Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show, Richmond Centre, Richmond, VA. Contact: Virginia Turfgrass Conference, 3646 Greenland Ave. NW, Roanoke, VA 24012, (804) 340-3473.

15-17 Michigan Turfgrass Conference, Contact: Mike Saffel, Dept. of Crop and Soil Sciences, Michigan State University, (517) 353-9022.

19-21 Sports Turf Managers Association Conference and Show, Wyndham Hotel Greenspoint, Houston, TX. Contact: STMA, P.O. Box 94857, Las Vegas, NV 89193, (702) 735-0000.

22-24 Midwest Regional Turf Conference, Adams Mark Hotel, Indianapolis, IN. Contact Jeff Lefton, Purdue University, Lilly Hall, W. Lafayette, IN 47907-7899, (317) 494-4772.

23-24 Inland Northwest Turf and Landscape Conference, Sheraton-Spokane Hotel, Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, WA. Contact: Jones & Associates, Park Center, Suite 200, N. 908 Howard, Spokane, WA 99201-2261, (509) 327-5904.

FEBRUARY

12-13 Athletic Turf Management Seminar, East Lansing, MI. Contact: National Institute on Parks and Grounds Management, P.O. Box 1936, Appleton, WI 54913, (414) 733-2301.

15-16 Athletic Turf Management Seminar, Jacksonville, FL. Contact: National Institute on Parks and Grounds Management, P.O. Box 1936, Appleton, WI 54913, (414) 733-2301.