

Talking It Over

by Mark Langner

A few weeks ago Dennis James hosted the AGCSA at Decatur Country Club. Our day began with a roundtable discussion among superintendents, vendors and guests. The major topics that evolved during the discussion included the following: bentgrass management, dealing with job difficulties, spring dead spot, and AGCSA meetings and membership benefits.

Jason Miller was moderator of the session that began with Dennis James discussing summer bentgrass management. Superintendents from all over revealed their aerification processes and the importance of timely aerifications. General consensus was a spring aerification with a large tine on the tightest spacing followed by a smaller tine aerification (.300 to .250) pre-summer, during the hotter months incorporating small solid tines, bayonet tines, or hydroject, and then finishing the year in the fall with a 1/2" aerification.

Dennis also enlightened us on the difficulties he was having communicating with a portion of his membership concerning aerification, and the difficulty they had with their greens in 2005. Like many of us he received an enormous amount of rainfall in July and August followed by extreme heat. Many of the rain events occurred in the early afternoon and high temperatures followed the showers. To say the least it was a difficult period and many of us suffered turf losses.

This discussion led us into the topic of what the AGCSA could do to assist superintendents when they had agronomic issues. The AGCSA was founded to promote fraternity and fellowship among its members. Our greatest knowledge comes from the experiences of others and members should always be there to help one another out. A participant suggested the association look in to hiring an agronomist to travel Alabama and provide assistance to those in need. Another idea was to develop a consultant committee that would assist a superintendent in need. Both ideas have merit and will be discussed in future board meetings.

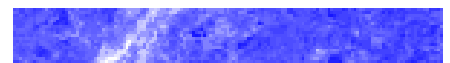
The AGCSA funds many research projects in the Southeast. Our major contributions go to the ATRF. In 2005 Dr. Peterson at Mississippi State began a study on Spring Dead Spot. Her main study involves what cultural practices and fertility practices cause the disease. She is also reviewing fungicide applications that help reduce the severity of the disease. It is too early in the study for results but I am confident that in 2006 we will start seeing some data from this study. Some ideas in combating this problem included the use of Rubigan, Heritage and fall fertility applications. Call Dr. Peterson, and I am sure she will share any results.

Mr. Miller then led us into the discussion of what the AGCSA could do to improve meeting attendance and membership participation. As we all know the pressure to stay at our facility from dawn to dusk, day in and day out has become the norm. We do however see enormous potential in meeting and sharing with others in the industry. Some ideas included taking an active role in picking up the superintendent down the road who has not been active and bringing him to a meeting; getting a calendar of events out early every year to help people schedule around the events; prepare a calendar of events for vendors to have with them so when they visit superintendents they can encourage them to participate in upcoming events. The group discussed golf-only outings and the consensus was that education needed to be part of the events. Some also suggested bringing club officials to the event as a way to build relationships and showing them the benefits of attending the meetings.

The day ended with a discussion concerning the future of golf. Most of us are faced with declining budgets and raised expectations. The budget decline is directly related to the over building of courses that spread players out. Many of us have a stream of older players, members and the industry needs more young golfers. Even though the game of golf should be grown through the Golf Operations staff

superintendents should take an active roll with the Golf staff to come up with ideas on growing the game and getting youth involved. Many facilities have implemented First Tee programs while others have begun 6 hole inverts to get youngsters involved. The bottom line is that we have to grow the game with the youth in society and it directly affects our jobs.

In conclusion the meeting was one of the best I have attended in 10 years. I thoroughly enjoyed the open forum discussing whatever was on the minds and hearts of my peers. The knowledge I have gained from others in the industry far outweighs what books can teach. Many of my current programs are copies of what someone else has tried and implemented at their facilities. Our Association is dependent upon the active involvement of its members, both vendors and superintendents. I continue to encourage everyone to participate and find out where you can assist the Association.



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