

NO COUCH POTATO

Dr. Houston Couch receives the 2003 USGA Green Section Award.

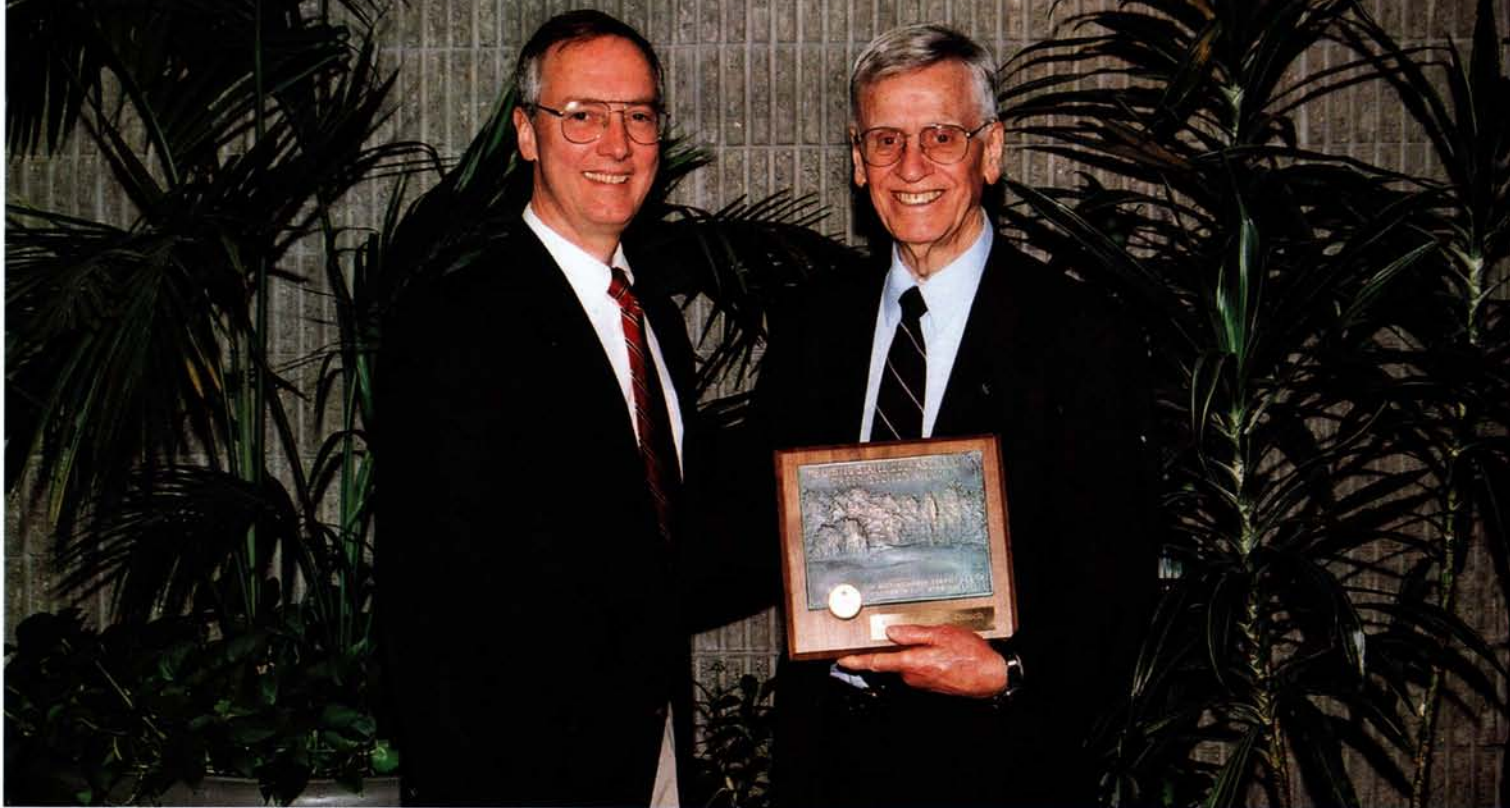
Dr. Houston Couch, plant pathologist at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, was selected as the recipient of the 2003 Green Section Award. Granted by a distinguished panel of experts in the turfgrass field, this annual award recognizes persons for distinguished contributions to golf through work with turfgrass. The award was presented to Dr. Couch by Bruce Richards, a member of the USGA Executive Committee, at the Golf Course Superintendents

Association of American Conference and Show in Atlanta, Georgia, on February 14, 2003.

Dr. Couch has proven to be a leader in many aspects of his life. A professor at VPI since 1965, he has taught plant pathology on the college level for nearly 50 years, impacting a countless number of students who have gone on in the turfgrass industry. He authored the first comprehensive turfgrass pathology textbook, *Diseases of Turfgrasses*, first published in 1965 and reprinted in three



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USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow congratulates Dr. Couch.

subsequent editions. His publication efforts continued with the release of *The Turfgrass Disease Handbook* in 2000.

During his career, he published more than 150 scientific papers and lectured at more than 500 industry conferences in the United States and internationally. His research focus established him as a recognized expert on root disease ecology and disease control.

In addition to his research and teaching, he has developed excellent educational tools, including a seasonal computer bulletin board and disease forecasting and control service for turfgrass managers and the general public.

His style is legendary. "As a much sought-after public speaker at turf conferences and seminars, he is in his element — always articulate and informative, frequently dogmatic and controversial, often the amusing raconteur, and seldom dull," writes Dr. Noel Jackson, professor emeritus, University of Rhode Island. "He has the experience and enthusiasm to stimulate an audience, and many in the turf industry, particularly those in golf course management, have benefited greatly from his unstinting endeavors."

A native of Estill Springs, Tennessee, as a young man Houston had aspirations of becoming a civil engineer and building bridges. In 1943, just 18 years old, he was drafted into the U.S. Army parachute infantry as part of the 517th Regimental Parachute Combat Team during World War II.

Following the Battle of the Bulge, he was wounded in action in Belgium and awarded the Purple Heart. He was honorably discharged in 1945.

Couch returned home and entered Tennessee Technological University. After watching the engineers during the war, he decided that engineering wasn't his calling. He graduated from Tennessee Tech with a Bachelor of Science degree in agronomy. While taking a plant pathology course, the professor so impressed him with the importance of the material that upon graduation he decided to further his studies, earning a Ph.D. in plant pathology from the University of California — Davis.

From 1954 to 1965, he taught botany and plant pathology at Penn State University. In 1965, he began his odyssey at VPI, teaching plant pathology and plant physiology. His students remember him well and think well of him. Dick Fisher, golf course superintendent at Farmington Country Club (Va.), writes, "I first met Dr. Couch as a freshman at Virginia Tech in 1965. He was teaching plant pathology then, and he is still teaching me plant pathology. The students feared his class because you were expected to learn the subject without any hand-holding on his part. At least that's what he told us. In reality, he has been holding our hands for the last 35 years to good effect."