

# 2004 USGA GREEN SECTION AWARD MONROE S. MILLER

Monroe Miller  
accepts the 2004  
Green Section Award  
from Bruce Richards,  
USGA Executive  
Committee.

Monroe S. Miller, golf course superintendent of Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wisconsin, was selected by a panel of experts in the turfgrass field to receive the USGA 2004 Green Section Award. This annual award is given in recognition and appreciation to persons for distinguished service to the game of golf through work with turfgrass. It was presented to Miller by Bruce Richards, a member of the USGA Executive Committee, at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Conference and Show in San Diego, Calif., on February 13, 2004.

"Not only is this a great honor for me, but really it is the ultimate honor any golf course superintendent could hope for," Miller said. "This honor and these memories will last forever, and I promise I will never stop working to uphold the high standards of the Green Section Award."

Monroe is the fourth Green Section Award winner with Wisconsin roots; he follows John Monteith, Jr. (1961), O. J. Noer (1963), and Charles Wilson (1982). Miller is best known throughout the turf industry as a prolific writer and the editor/publisher of *The Grass Roots*, the official publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association (WGCSA). Superintendents and turf professionals within and outside Wisconsin subscribe to *The Grass Roots* for timely educational content and candid editorial commentary. The prestigious GCSAA award for best content in a chapter publication with an unpaid editor has gone to Miller for the past 19 years running.

Growing up on a southwest Wisconsin dairy farm, he credits that experience as giving him much that has held up through the years as a golf course superintendent: self-sufficiency, common sense, hard work, determination, and more. "There also was a chance to learn an appreciation of the seasons, respect for the land, and to become imbued with the practice of planting, cultivation, and harvest — all the things that we enjoy on a golf course," described Miller.

He worked summers at Nakoma Golf Club from 1967 to 1969 while attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After attaining his B.S.



degree in Soil Science and serving two years in the U.S. Army, he returned to Madison. In 1972 he was a teaching assistant in the U.W. College of Agriculture and also worked at Maple Bluff Country Club. From 1973 to the present, he has been the golf course superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club. His 32-year tenure at one club speaks volumes of his unique ability to adapt to an ever-evolving industry. With kudos to Blackhawk Country Club, Miller stated, "My employer has fostered and encouraged active participation in golf course organizations and university affairs, and considers those responsibilities and activities part of any professional citizenship."

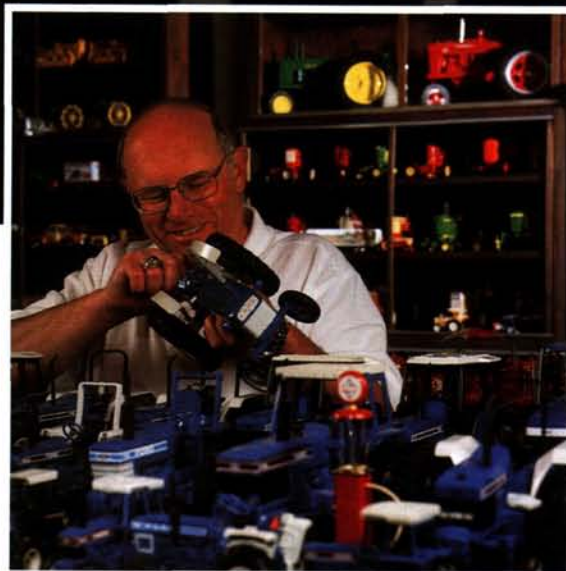
He has served on the board and as president of both the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association. In 1989 he was awarded the WGCSA's Distinguished Service Award. Since 1986, he has consistently supported and promoted the Turf Advisory Service and other USGA activities as a member of the Green Section Committee.

Monroe is known as a visionary, and perhaps one of his most important contributions to the turf industry is his least-known effort. More than a decade ago he spearheaded a campaign to raise the \$250,000 required to obtain \$100,000 in matching funds for a University of Wisconsin field turfgrass research facility. After overseeing the



construction of the O.J. Noer Research Facility, he immediately embarked on an even greater task: the establishment of a stable level of funding that would support graduate student research on problems confronting the turf industry. He leads the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association in their goal to raise \$1 million that, when matched and invested by the Wisconsin Research Foundation, will generate enough interest to annually support four graduate research fellowships. Through his determination, the Association is already nearly halfway toward the \$1 million goal.

According to Dr. Wayne Kussow, professor of soil science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: "Of the 200+ students who have graduated from the Turf and Grounds Management Program thus far, nearly one-half of them have benefited immeasurably from having worked for Monroe. He not only imparts to them the technical skills they need, but, as he states it, the *passion* for the job. His willingness to take on students part-time during the school year as well as full-time during the summer creates the unique opportunity for students to experience what goes into shutting down a golf course for the winter and getting it ready for play the following spring. These are valuable learning experiences that the students do not gain through summer internships."



One former Blackhawk Country Club assistant superintendent who sat in the front row while Monroe accepted the Green Section Award said, "I'm up in the front row to show my support for Monroe, just as he always has sat in the front countless times to learn from and support all of his colleagues."

Others may desire and seek recognition from their peers for a job well done. This has never been Miller's style. He tirelessly works quietly behind the scenes in relative anonymity and rarely takes credit for his considerable achievements. He always privately and publicly recognizes others for their contributions to golf turf management or research regardless of how great or small the contribution might be. However, turnabout is fair play; the USGA thanks Monroe S. Miller for his unselfish dedication to golf and the turf industry with the Green Section Award.

Above: Fellow Wisconsinites joined Monroe at the Green Section Education Conference. Here is a small subsample of those former and current assistant superintendents, interns, and colleagues (left to right): Chad Grimm (Blackhawk C.C.), Mike Semler (Bruce Co.), Monroe Miller (Admire Greenscapes), Bob Erdahl (North Shore C.C.), and Ric Lange (Meadowbrook C.C.).

Left: Monroe has collected model tractors since he was ten years old. He and his wife, Cheryl, have a room in their home, affectionately called The Machine Shed, dedicated to displaying his collection.