

THE EXTRA POINT

STMA NEWS

FROM THE PRESIDENT



A few weeks ago a school district in California advertised an open position for supervisor of athletic fields. The job involved the care of several fields, including a football field, a baseball field, and some general-purpose play fields. The requirements for the job were a passing grade on a public service examination

for custodians and a valid California driver's license.

There was no mention of experience or knowledge of turfgrass maintenance. This was not a small or poor school district. There is no reason to believe that this district was any less informed about sports field management than most others. School administrators tend to ignore the fields and field managers until they see the little baton twirlers up to their tutus in mud during the half-time show, or when the district gets sued for neglect.

School officials aren't the only administrators in the dark about what it takes to successfully manage sports fields. They aren't even the most notorious. There are some highly visible public and private facilities with spectacular failures due to inexperienced field management.

There are a lot of very good, competent sports field managers, many of whom just grew into the job. Sometimes a kid was hired off the street to mow the grass, and over 15 or 20 years of work on the field he became extremely knowledgeable. The field always looked pretty and there weren't any complaints. That is still probably the best method to produce good sports field managers. Unfortunately, there is no longer adequate time to grow sports turf managers.

The number of sports field facilities, such as schools, parks, and sports complexes, has tremendously increased in the past few years, and there has been an explosion in the use demand. All of this has occurred in spite of administrators blindly stumbling along, continuing to hire kids off the street, not realizing there is more to sports turf management than mowing grass and assuming that the kid would learn what he needed to know.

Back in 1984, when Dr. Kent Kurtz helped get STMA off the ground as executive director, one of the goals was to upgrade and professionalize the sports turf manager. He and STMA have accomplished a great deal in getting visibility for the sports turf manager. Dr. Kurtz has retired from his role as executive director of STMA, but he gave us a purpose and pointed the direction. Let's keep his work going.

Help STMA reach the decision makers. Help STMA make them aware that it is in their best interest to have qualified people in charge of sports fields—that it takes skill, knowledge, and art to manage a sports field. If we are to gain the respect due our profession, everyone in STMA has to contribute.

S.T. Cockerham

KURTZ RETIRES AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Kent Kurtz recently announced his retirement from the post of executive director of the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA). Kurtz, professor of horticulture at Cal-Poly, Pomona, told the STMA board of directors that the organization had grown to the point where the time required was much more than he was able to provide. In his term as executive director, Kurtz presided over STMA's growth from 60 members in 1984 to nearly 900 members in 1989.

Mark Hodnick, superintendent of grounds at Cal-Poly, Pomona, was elected by the board to serve as executive director. Hodnick, a close personal friend and former student of Kurtz, is immediate past president of STMA and former treasurer of the organization.

Kurtz will still be closely tied to STMA in the newly created position of education coordinator for national and regional conferences. In appreciation of his contributions to STMA, the board voted to award Kurtz a Life Membership.

NEW OFFICE ASSISTANT

Gini Scharfman is the new voice of STMA when you call up headquarters in Upland, CA. The experienced administrative and accounting assistant, who recently moved to the Los Angeles area from Houston, TX, has already made great strides in organizing headquarters operations, states Executive Director Mark Hodnick.

Scharfman is a sports fan by default, having grown up with four active brothers. She also has six grown children who participate in various sports. Her husband's uncle, Herbie Scharfman, was the official photographer for the Brooklyn Dodgers at Ebbets Field. In other words, instead of getting mad on Sunday afternoon when her husband watches football or baseball, she joins him.

"STMA members will find Gini a very dedicated individual," says Hodnick. "We're lucky to have her on our staff."

CATCH THE ACTION

Mark your calendar.

March 21 — Western Sports Turf Institute
California Polytechnic Institute and University, Pomona, CA.

June 21 — Midwest Sports Turf Institute
Harper College, Palatine, IL.



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