

# THE EXTRA POINT

## STMA NEWS

### FROM THE PRESIDENT



It's the grass, working and playing on the grass. My last column as president of STMA concerns how I got into this business.

My dad used to take me golfing two or three times a year. That wasn't a lot of golf, but it doesn't take a lot for the fever to take hold. I was fascinated by the big, green fairways and the carpet-like smoothness of the

putting greens.

In high school, I went to work for Elwood Country Club. It was a nine-hole course in central Indiana. Charles Almony was the combination pro-superintendent. We called him "Hunk" for the way he hunkered over when he hit towering 300-yard drives. Each summer until I graduated from college, I was half of his two-man work force.

All of us became involved in the problem-solving and the worrying, as well as the hard work that goes along with operating a small course. Rookie golf course laborers started out raking sand traps and pulling weeds. We then learned to identify weeds, diseases, and insects. Hunk's idea was to get us to understand turf and its effect on the game.

I went to Purdue to become an engineer. But, like a light being turned on, I discovered that Dr. Bill Daniel had a turf program. In my sophomore year, I switched to agronomy and worked for Dr. Daniel and a young graduate student by the name of Jim Beard. Working during the school year for those two, and summers on the golf course with Hunk, gave me as good an education as I was capable of absorbing.

After graduating, I worked as a golf course superintendent, spent a couple of years straightening out the world in a brand new venture called the Peace Corps, and eventually took a job as assistant county agent in northeastern Pennsylvania. Most of the extension work was in turf, and it provided my introduction to sports turf.

Football was very important to that region and still is. School administrators were concerned about football field quality and really tried to do something about it. Around that time, Dr. Jack Harper at Penn State wrote one of the first booklets on construction and maintenance of athletic fields. It quickly became my most valuable reference.

In 1983, with the help of Dr. Jim Watson, vice president for The Toro Company, I was hired by the Los Angeles Coliseum as a consultant to assist in preparing the field for the 1984 Olympics. Working on the field with fellow consultant Dick Baldwin and the staff at the Coliseum became an exciting adventure. We successfully met the challenges of the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies, concerts, religious events, movies, commercials, soccer and football.

I have learned the intimate details of managing the turf at a major sports facility. It is crisis management rewarded with the euphoria of success. I have the utmost respect for people who do it every day, withstanding the constant, immense pressure.

My primary job right now is managing the operations of a large agricultural experiment station in Southern California. Part of my work involves research on turfgrass, mostly in the area of sports turf. I still keep in touch with the real world by consulting.

Last year, I was elected president of STMA. I am honored to have been chosen by my peers. A lot of good things have happened this year. Much would have happened in spite of me, but a little good did happen that I can take credit for. I hope I am leaving STMA better than it was when I took office. I know that I am better for the STMA experience.

All of the jobs and experiences have allowed me to make a good living. They had meaning because of the grass. When called upon, I gladly served. Thank you, STMA, for the chance you gave me.

*Steve Cockerham*

### ORLANDO CHOSEN AS SITE FOR SOUTHEAST INSTITUTE

The Citrus Bowl in Orlando, FL, has been selected as the site for the Southeastern Sports Turf Institute on March 6. The University of Georgia and the University of Florida are assisting STMA with the educational program and product demonstrations. The format for the event will be the same as other STMA institutes, with seminars in the morning and product demonstrations in the afternoon. Special tickets for a spring training baseball game on March 7 will be available.

To register for the institute, send a check for \$30 (members) or \$40 (nonmembers) to STMA headquarters before February 25. On-site registration will be available for an additional \$10.

### CATCH THE ACTION!

*Mark your calendar!*

**January 19-21**

**Annual Conference and Trade Show**

Wyndham Greenspoint Hotel, Houston, TX

**March 6**

**Southeastern Sports Turf Institute**

Citrus Bowl, Orlando, FL

**March 20**

**West Coast Sports Turf Institute**

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA



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