

Field Trip



I recently had a chance to get away from my desk for a trip into the field. The Midwest Chapter STMA was holding a workshop in my area, so I decided to venture out to see the association in action.

The prospect of getting a little bit of fresh air in my lungs and feeling the warmth of the morning sun on my neck would have been enough to lure me to the Park District in Carol Stream, IL, that Wednesday, but curiosity had just as much to do with it. Though I work closely with the organiza-

tion's members to put this magazine together, I hadn't gone out of my way to get involved on a local level.

The morning of the New Ballfield Construction Seminar, heavy, gray rain clouds threatened the sunny images that I had played out in my mind. I was really disappointed, and figured that the event would surely be postponed — after all, nature does have the final say in this industry. I was surprised to learn that the workshop would proceed, despite the weather.

The morning session opened with coffee and donuts, which won me over from the start. One thing I've noticed about these association types is that they know good food — that in itself is usually enough to get me involved.

Full and content, I settled in for the field construction presentations, which turned out to be quite interesting. The speakers stuck to the practical information. They didn't get up there and tell the attendees how to do their jobs, they simply shared their own experiences.

The atmosphere was casual and friendly, and the audience wasn't afraid to get involved by asking questions. It was becoming clear that this group was just a bunch of people who shared common problems in their work. They had decided to pool their resources and share their stories.

In fact, much of the learning took place outside of the "classroom" situation. Between presentations, attendees clustered in groups to continue the idea exchange. Everyone seemed to be taking full advantage of the opportunity to share in the diverse collection of expertise.

George Bannerman, owner of the equipment company that bears his name, ended the morning session with product demonstrations. This is another perk of membership in the STMA — they're a fairly well-connected organization.

Bannerman showed us his newest line of products and explained all of the innovations that are making life easier for sports turf managers. After lunch — which reinforced my faith in the association's good taste — Bannerman jumped on his tractor and zipped around the field in a series of hands-on product demonstrations. I think that by the end of it all, many of the attendees were calculating their budgets in their heads.

All and all, my field trip was a resounding success. It never did rain, and I left with a satisfied belly and a head full of new and useful information that will help me as I return to my desk and the magazine.

I urge you to check out these meetings if you haven't already. The STMA is a great group of people, and they're always looking for others who have experiences to share.

Steve Berens, Editor
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Tip o' the Month



Fair Lines

by Floyd Perry

If new labor- and cost-saving concepts can be incorporated into maintenance programs without sacrificing field safety and playability, the whole community wins. A little bit of innovative pre-construction planning can save years of post-construction labor and expense.

For instance, the clay areas of softball and baseball fields are generally marked daily, since games require lines to distinguish fair and foul areas of play. We've always referred to these lines as "foul lines," but we have to remember that if the ball hits the line, the base, or the pole, it's a fair ball. If we think in terms of "fair lines," it's an entirely different ballgame.

Fair lines run beneath the bases, since the whole base is considered fair territory. Some progressive



groundskeepers paint the clay surface to avoid clay build-up and smear marks after dragging.

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For outfields, a couple of options allow you to eliminate tedious maintenance and long-term turf problems. Avoid chalk or marking powder, since most of these products don't decompose. After years of



use, they will build up to create bumps. Many groundskeepers will cut a soil path that runs the length of the chalk line.



Used in conjunction with a short cropped mower, a spray aerosol can be used to mark a field. This gives the field a neat and clean appearance, and it takes a minimal amount of effort. Lines will last approximately seven days. You can add turf regulators to reduce the turf's vertical growth and increase the life of your lines.

Some facilities use the edge of the turf as the fair line. Granted, some kinds of turf require periodic edging, but this kind of design reduces line marking and frees up maintenance time. This practice also makes it easier for umpires to make a



tough call. This solution is much more desirable than using damaging, non-selective herbicides, as pictured. □

Floyd Perry is author of three books: The Pictorial Guides to Quality Groundskeeping: I - Covering the Bases; II - There Ain't No Rules; and III - Maintain It Easy, Keep It Safe. He also produces two videos: The ABC's of Grounds Maintenance: Vol. 1, Softball; and Vol. 2, Baseball. For more information, call: (800) 227-9381, or visit his web site: <http://gms.simplenet.com>.

Q: What do all of these teams have in common?

Oakland A's
Arizona Diamondbacks
University of Texas Longhorns
San Diego Chargers
University of Southern California Trojans
California Angels
Arizona State University Sun Devils
San Francisco 49'ers
San Diego State University Aztecs
San Francisco Giants
San Diego Padres
Los Angeles Dodgers
Oakland Raiders
Arizona Cardinals

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