

Dr. Henry Indyk: *sportsTURF's* 1999 Man of the Year

by Colleen Heraty

Take a little persistence and hard work, mix in intelligence and a friendly smile, add integrity and generosity, and you come up with Henry Indyk, *sportsTURF's* Man of the Year for 1999.

Asked to describe Dr. Indyk, everyone interviewed for this article mentioned the word "willing." Without Indyk's help, the STMA would not be where it is today.

Indyk played a key role in saving the association seven years ago when it was deeply in debt and in danger of collapsing. There were many times when he spent money from his own pocket to travel to meetings and provide food for attendees before the association gained widespread recognition and corporate support. He never gave up, and his leadership helped build the solid foundation on which the organization stands today.

STMA has evolved into a well-respected organization, and it's growing faster every year. The association has come a long way since those early days when it couldn't even afford to feed members lunch at meetings. Now, STMA's scholarships help a new generation of groundskeepers speed the momentum Dr. Indyk helped create.



Dr. Henry Indyk with Dr. Dick Caton at the 1993 STMA Conference.

Courtesy: STMA

Personal accomplishments

A retired consultant and former professor, Indyk's list of accomplishments is as rich as it is long.

Indyk holds a BS degree in Plant Science-Soils from Rutgers University. He earned his MS and Ph.D. in Agronomy-Soils at Penn State University.

Henry remained active in the academic community throughout his career. He served as a research agronomist for the University of Delaware, and was extension specialist in turfgrass management at Rutgers University.

As turfgrass consultant for Turfcon, Indyk focused primarily on sports fields and golf courses. He has also worked as consulting editor for Time-Life Books, Ortho Lawn Books, and Brooklyn Botanic Garden Lawn Book.

Henry's record of service to the STMA is just as impressive. He served on the STMA Board of Directors as secretary, and stepped down at the end of his second term as commercial vice president in December 1997.

Henry co-chaired most of STMA's annual conferences since he became active in the association. He continued in an advisory capacity for the 1997 event.

Indyk has played an instrumental role in STMA's committees as well. He served on the Awards Committee until the end of 1997, when he stepped down as part of the natural rotation.

He also supported STMA's Certification Program since its inception. He helped pioneer this important program as co-chair of the Certification Committee.

In 1994, STMA recognized Indyk's contributions to the association and the industry as a whole with its most prestigious award: the Harry C. Gill Award. One of the four Founders Awards, the Gill Award honors STMA's groundskeep-



Left to right: Eugene Mayer, Steve Guise, Greg Petry, Mike Schiller, Dr. Henry Indyk, and Gil Landry.

Courtesy: STMA

er of the year. It recognizes long-term commitment to the association's goals and standards.

Peer respect

Greg Petry, executive director of the Waukegan (IL) Park District, first ran into Indyk at the Vero Beach STMA Conference. Indyk was walking on the ball field checking things out, lifting things up, and turning things over to see what makes them tick.

"Even though he's a Ph.D, he balances things with research and the practical side of things," Petry says. "He knows how to take technical research-oriented information and apply it practically."

Petry, who served with Henry on the STMA Board for several years, describes Indyk as someone you can count on to deliver. He says that Henry is a lot of fun to be around and is always one step ahead of everybody: "He doesn't sit on the sidelines



STMA Board members at BOB in November 1997. Courtesy: STMA

and be a critic. He jumps in and says, "What can I do to make it better?"

Dr. Gil Landry, extension turf specialist at University of Georgia, served with Henry on the STMA Board from 1992-96. Landry describes Indyk as an industry leader, not only in his state and region, but nationally as well.

Landry applauds Indyk for taking time out of at least six of his retirement years to serve on the STMA Board after 30-some years of work. "A lot of that speaks for Henry's personal integrity and his willingness to serve for the benefit of others," Landry says. "It would be great if we could find a few more Henry Indyks in the future.

"You don't get involved in things as Henry does without being criticized at some point in time," Landry says. "That's just an example of his dedication, to accept criticism and to do what he believes is right."

Mike Schiller, superintendent of parks for Rolling Meadows (IL) Park District, also served with Indyk on the STMA Board. They currently work together on the Certification Committee.

"He always has a smile on his face and manages to make you feel comfortable," Schiller says. "He makes you feel like the most important person in the room when you talk to him."

"During these past few years, Indyk has really been a part of the glue that keeps the organization moving in a forward direction," says regular *sportsTURF* columnist Dave Minner. "He has given us a forward vision and kept us on track."

STMA President Steve Guise has worked closely with Indyk for the past seven years. He says, "There's no one who has done more for the education and structuring of our organization than Henry has done over these past seven years," Guise says. "He's more than just an associate, he's our friend."

Richard Caton, Indyk's former business partner in Turfcon, is now executive director for the New Jersey Turfgrass Association. He remembers, "We always had great debates when we traveled together. Over the years, we have settled all the major problems of the planet. Some in my favor; most in his."

The two still enjoy a close professional and personal relationship. Caton says, "I consider him to be the

finest athletic field expert in terms of design, construction, and maintenance, in my judgment, in the world," Caton says. "He's certainly a marvelous soil scientist, and has made countless contributions to the state of the art for over 35-40 years." □

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