

Cold, Rainy Weather Won't Keep Us Down

STMA in Action

On May 5, 28 people came to Saint Albert High School in Council Bluffs, IA for a workshop sponsored by Iowa STMA. Unseasonably cold weather and nearly steady precipitation prevented some of the planned outdoor demonstrations, but the rain could not dampen all of the day's activities.

Participants did get to see a new piece of equipment for skinned area preparation used on the softball field. They also received some excellent on-site tips from "Q&A" Columnist Dr. David Minner of Iowa State University. He reported on some of his research with infield mixes, and demonstrated why the one in use on Saint Albert's field was performing so well. He answered questions on drainage and on avoiding rain outs.

At the start of the meeting, attendees introduced themselves and told the group what they hoped to gain from the event. Two high school baseball coaches were there to get field maintenance pointers. A high school athletic director came to get information to pass along to coaches and the janitor. Several parks and recreation department personnel wanted to learn from their peers and share information on their experiences.

Approximately half of the attendees traveled across the river from Nebraska to attend. During the meeting, some attendees expressed interest in getting a chapter started in Nebraska.

Presentations

- Julie Smith of Big Bear Equipment (formerly assistant groundskeeper with the Iowa Cubs) talked in detail about the various

steps of skinned area care. She discussed pre-game prep and post-game procedures. She stressed moisture management, and discussed the use of covers to control moisture levels.

- Dr. Roch Gaussoin of the University of Nebraska discussed weed control. He cautioned that using some of the new, long-lasting pre-emergents on athletic fields may require reseeding, and that the seed will be wasted on areas that are still protected by an active weed-control barrier.



Unseasonably cold and rainy weather couldn't keep attendees inside at an ISTMA Workshop at Saint Albert High School in Council Bluffs. Courtesy: STMA

He suggested doing a pot test before reseeding. Take some soil from the top inch of the test area and place it in a Styrofoam cup. Sprinkle some ryegrass seed on top, and keep it moist for five to seven days. If the seed doesn't germinate as it should, don't waste your dollars by applying any seed on that field.

Gaussoin also discouraged using broad spectrum products when only one or two species of weeds are present. These problems can be better controlled with less expensive products specially designed for specific weeds.

- Rohm and Haas Co.

Representative Bruce Bates gave a presentation on grub control. He detailed different grub life cycles in the Midwest, and explained methods of control.

- Mike Grooms of United Seed talked about selecting seed. He cautioned against looking at price over quality, and provided information on how to determine seed quality.

- Dr. David Minner talked about quick fixes, aerification, and top-dressing. He also suggested that those who are on very tight budgets, or who need certain pieces of equipment very sporadically, should get acquainted with their local Golf Course Superintendents. A good working relationship can lead to equipment loans or cost sharing.

Minner also provided information on an infield mix database he's developing. He asked that attendees complete and return a form along with samples of their infield mixes. He offered to analyze and identify each mix and to log the provided information into his database. Eventually, Minner plans to rate mixes in terms of percentages of people who like and dislike them, and to explore their reasons.

This project is not limited to Iowa. Anyone who would like to participate should contact Dr. Minner at Iowa State University, 106 Horticulture, Ames, IA 50011; phone: (515) 294-5726.

Despite the weather, those questioned felt it was a very informative day. Attendees said they had gotten as much or more out of the experience as they had expected, and that they looked forward to more sessions like this one. ISTMA plans to hold two more of these workshops in other parts of Iowa.