



Spirit in St. Louis

From what I heard, St. Louis experienced fantastic weather between Jan. 12-16.

Personally, I wouldn't know. Not because I wasn't in the "Gateway to the West;" I was. I just didn't get out much.

Almost all the features of the 11th Annual Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) Conference and Trade Show were held in the Regal Riverfront Hotel. Registration, meals, educational sessions, workshops, the trade show and the awards ceremony were all held under one roof. Overall, there were more than 500 registered attendees at the convention, plus 245 exhibiting personnel from the 88 companies participating in the trade show.

Many of you were with me in St. Louis for this event, and I had a great time meeting several of you, finally putting names and faces to people I had known only as voices on the telephone or pictures in a magazine. From talking with you—either formally in sessions, conferences, discussions and workshops, or informally at meals and in elevators—I learned a wealth of invaluable information about the sports turf industry.

The highlight for me was the STMA Annual Awards Banquet, held on Friday evening. The air of formality was lifted from the banquet when, after Steve Trusty gave his invocation, four large, bearded men wearing leather and denim stormed the hall, shouting out as they marched between the tables. There was nervous laughter as Steve called out for security, but it soon became obvious that these men were part of the show. The four men, members of a musical group called "Expanded Sound," mounted a small stage and cracked jokes in between humorous songs sung in the style of a barbershop quartet. They returned after dinner, this time in golfing attire, to do their act again and received another great response from the crowd.

The round table discussions held on the last full day of the conference showed me the true spirit of the STMA. I listened to Steve Wightman, stadium turf manager of QUALCOMM Stadium, share tips, secrets and stories with turf managers from minor league, college and recreational ball parks across the country. There was no hierarchy to the discussion, no sense that because Steve works at a Major League facility he had a higher standing among those seated around him. They were just men and women talking turf, pure and simple, and it was very encouraging to see.

Business

It wasn't all talk in St. Louis. The board met on Saturday for its annual meeting, where Stephen Guise handed the (enormous) presidential gavel to Rich Moffitt, who addressed the crowd for the first time as Association President. Check the masthead on page 40 for an updated listing of STMA officers and board members.

All in all it was a great week in St. Louis, filled with laughs, learning, networking and some moderate drinking in the Dugout Bar. And while I never was able to experience the great weather outside, I can say this much: The temperature in the hotel was just fine.

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Calendar of Events 2000

February 8-12

Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) Midwinter Conference & Exposition: "Turfgrass Sod Production for the New Millennium," Adam's Mark Hotel, San Antonio, Texas. Feb. 8: Inaugural Al Gardner Memorial Golf Outing, The Quarry Golf Club, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Tom Ford: (800) 405-TURF (8873)/(847) 705-9898, or Turf-Grass@msn.com.

February 9-11

Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference & Trade Show, Pittsburgh Expo Mart/Radisson Hotel, Monroeville, Pa. Contact PTC: (814) 863-3475.

February 15-16

Rutgers University (RU) continuing education course: "Successful Identifying and Effectively Managing Turf Weeds," RU, New Brunswick, N.J. Contact Kurt Martens: (732) 932-8451.

February 21-25

Cornell University's Turfgrass Management Short Course, Holiday Inn and Conference Center, Fishkill, N.Y. Tuition: \$600. Contact Joann Gruttadaurio: (607) 255-1792 or jg17@cornell.edu.

February 22-24

Ohio State University Professional Grounds Maintenance Short Course, Holiday Inn on the Lane, Columbus, Ohio. Cost: \$190. Contact Barb Bloetscher: (614) 292-7457.