

Old school networking

Who will win the Minnesota/Iowa Chapter Challenge?

Mike McDonald, CSFM
University of Minnesota

I like questions that have a definitive answer. After 3 consecutive years of defeat Iowa is now the reigning champion. Just for the record, Minnesota has won the softball tournament 3 out of 4 years and Iowa has won the golf tournament 3 out of 4 years. Since sportsturf rules, it is the softball tournament that the corn-fed Iowans coveted.

Minnesota captain Mike McDonald offered up the broom in the 7th inning as Iowa made a clean sweep with a 37 to 7 softball victory. Bragging rights aside the real winners are all those who get involved with the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA). This unofficial event was conceived in 1999 during a de-turfing session. We play golf one afternoon and softball the next morning with a cookout or ballgame tailgate and a few beverages in between.

This year we played Bocce on one of the putting greens during the cookout at the ISU Turf Research Station. Scoring was optional and play was halted as darkness swal-

lowed the paullina or "pea ball" as we called it. Thanks to Iowa captain Mike Andresen for broadening our experience with a new game, Bocce, which is kind of like horseshoes played with croquet balls and the little pea ball can be rolled anywhere as the target.

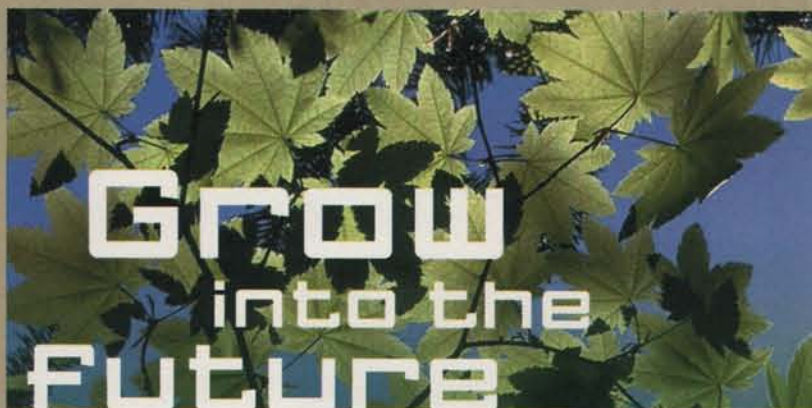
We also had a tour of the facility and looked at some of the research pertaining to sand pad construction, species traffic tolerance, and bermudagrass used to patch up worn fields in the summer. We always make it simple, inexpensive, and fun for everyone. The participating athletes this year aged from 17 to 50 something. Family and kids attended as well.

As usual I look to learn something at every event and this is what I learned: Networking may be considered a new era form of communication, but these guys and gals have been networking in their own way for quite some time. Their competitive spirit, as a player of the sport was equaled by their competitive desire to make the best playing surfaces. STMA relationships can go way beyond bylaws, certification, and education. These guys and gals are simply good friends and as for the networking, well who wouldn't share their knowledge and experience with their friends.

During this year's Chapter Challenge I was involved in group and one on one discussions about good and bad jobs and employers, the direction of natural and synthetic turf, products and equipment that performs as well as equipment about which we are uncertain. This is the type of detailed information and experience that you simply don't read about and I certainly can't write about. Maybe that's what networking is, inside "trading" that's legal.

Many of you are responsible for getting others involved and for finding speakers for your Chapter education events. An out growth of the Chapter Challenge/friendship has been an exchange of members to speak at their state turf conference and STMA workshops.

On behalf of the Iowa Chapter we look forward to next year's Chapter Challenge in Minnesota. And by the way, Captain McDonald, thanks for teaching us that wonderful Minnesota expression about opening a can of whoop . . . 37-7. **ST**



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Minnesota/Iowa Chapter Challenge softball participants, post-game. Iowa won 37-7 but the Minnesota Chapter looked better in their matching blue shirts.

Have Questions?

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