

Sportsturf Manager of the Year: Dr. Tony Koski

Former golf course super-turned-professor promotes professionalism, brings turf managers together

BY ERIC SCHRODER

Dr. Tony Koski has been chosen *Sportsturf's* 2002 Manager of the Year by his new peer group, the previous winners of the award. The reason Tony was selected this year is perhaps best described by Abby McNeal, the assistant turfgrass manager for INVESCO Field @ Mile High, Denver:

"Tony has always been available to answer questions or to offer advice. He has helped me as an academic advisor through college and after graduation, for the past 7 1/2 years. Tony has made countless visits to my job sites, to just stop by and talk about the fields. The advice and guidance he has offered me throughout my young turf career is irreplaceable."

Kalin Stovall, Colorado State University sports turf manager, says Dr. Koski is involved and helpful. "He's introduced me to people that I've learned from, and he's great at networking. If he doesn't know the answer to a question, he'll connect you to someone who does know the answer," says Stovall. "He couldn't make our last home football game this year but was listening to it on the radio; late in the game he heard it was 'slippery' so he called me after the game to find out what had happened. The field had started to frost up a bit was all, but Tony wanted to check in with me on it."

"He's so involved. On top of his teaching, horticulture research, working with students and graduate students, the Turf Club, involvement in the Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association where, for example, this year he's an integral part of the upcoming conference," Stovall continues. "He never says 'no.'"

"He's always trying to educate, and help people in this industry land on their feet. He's incredibly knowledgeable whether it's knowing the tried and true methods or the latest websites to check out. He has hands-on experience too, he's not just all about books," says Stovall.

Steve Wightman, ST's Manager of the Year in 1996, says, "I met Tony in 1988 when he interviewed at CSU. He was of course, the unanimous choice. Tony has been a profound inspirational leader in the turfgrass industry. His quiet unassuming demeanor commands attention in reaping the rewards of both his insightful knowledge of turfgrass science and his friendly, humorous personality. Tony's dedication to the sports field industry manifested by his important research and personal involvement makes our industry proud, honored, and privileged to have him recognized as Manager of the Year."

Ideal industry representative

Tony has been involved with turfgrass teaching, research, and extension since 1980, when he began working on his MS degree at Ohio State. After finishing his Ph.D. in 1987, he became assistant professor of turfgrass management at Colorado State University, where currently he advises approximately 60 undergraduate students, teaches a turfgrass management class, and provides extension education for all facets of the Rocky Mountain turfgrass industry. Since 1988, he has coordinated the educational program for the annual Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Conference that attracts around 1,000 turf professionals.

Tony has been a member of the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) since 1990 and is currently a Board member. He serves as Education Committee Chair, putting together the people who set up the STMA Conference program (and does much of the meat of that assignment himself, we hear). He also works with other STMA education issues, including developing a speaker's bureau. Tony also serves on the Certification Committee and worked with the entire Committee to develop the test for Certification and took charge of setting up the test format, says Suz Trusty, STMA communications director.

He also serves on the SAFE Foundation Board and is developing the criteria for research grants, along with other issues affecting research. Tony is an Honorary Member of the Colorado Chapter of STMA.

Suz Trusty says, "He's a mentor for more students and former students than I can count. This year, the two Dr. James Watson Scholarship recipients are from the Colorado State turf program, undergrad Don Frantz and graduate student James Newberry. Tony has a wonderful ability to provide information in a format his audience can understand, whether he's making a formal address to a high-tech group, giving an on-field clinic for a group that has never tackled a sports field project before, or talking one-to-one with anyone. Besides that, he's a genuinely nice guy!"

"Tony realizes the importance of sports turf management and the abilities of sports turf managers, and he promotes that nationwide. He's dedicated to the importance of athletic fields and those who take care of them at all levels, park and rec to professional," says Dave Rulli, STMA board member and stadium manager at Jeffco Stadium, Lakewood, CO.

"He's always available and always willing to help. Tony bridges the gap between the professional level at Coors Field or Invesco to guys at the high school level. He connects people, makes us all one instead of putting some at a high level, and making others afraid to bother them. He treats everyone like we are in one big common-goal group."

"He's very deserving."

Tony's vision

"I believe that education is of paramount importance to the formation and continued development of the sports turf manager. The importance of education has become even more evident to me through involvement with the STMA Certification program, as a current Board member, and as a speaker at a number of STMA Chapter meetings across the country," says Tony on the STMA website.

"I sense a genuine need and demand for quality education among sports turf managers everywhere. The STMA is working hard to fill those needs via the national conference, *Sportsturf* and newsletter, through chapter support, and with the initiation of the Certification Program. It is exciting for me to participate in these endeavors."

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