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That's one big baby!

All one needs to know about the dedication of turf managers was evident in a short elevator conversation between Ross Kurcab of the Denver Broncos and yours truly as we headed for the STMA Awards Banquet in San Antonio last January. Ross got on, we said hello and then I asked him, "Are you ready to go home yet?"

"Yes," he replied, "I miss my baby." Having a preschooler and a toddler at home myself, I asked, "Oh, do you have a new baby at home?" With one eyebrow slightly raised Ross responded, "No, I mean my field."

We talked for a few more moments about how Ross can keep tabs on things while he's away, via his computer, and then said so long as we encountered the pre-dinner throng. I wasn't surprised a bit later that night when the recipient of the prestigious Harry C. Gill Memorial Award was announced—Ross Kurcab.

And he's not alone in his passion, not only for his own turf but also for the profession in general from what I could tell in talking with folks at the Conference. I suppose if someone was just going through the motions as a turf manager he or she wouldn't bother attending such a gathering anyway but then again it would be quite a trick for any manager to just "phone in." I suspect that person soon would be in the unemployment line.

Speaking of employment, a young Single A groundskeeper was networking during the meeting, looking for another position. This person hadn't actually been let go but team management had issued an unpaid furlough during the winter months for budgetary reasons. This might seem reasonable but I was told the manager was still expected to hire staff, work with vendors, etc., to prepare for the upcoming season! Your honor, I present Exhibit A for lack of understanding of how valuable turf managers are to the overall success of an organization. Sheesh.

STMA Conference Wednesday afternoons feature "Jam Sessions," at which the different category members get together with their peers to discuss common issues. I bounced around these sessions to listen (all of the rooms were, uh, "jammed"). After I had been in the Category I session awhile it dawned on me that this was the Big Time, that the guys and gals in this room were the ones responsible for the fields I see on television all the time. Maybe I'm goofy but I got a big kick out of hanging out with this group of VIPs.

During all the sessions, workshops, and roundtables I attended, one universal theme seemed to come up time after time and that is communication. No matter what level you are at in your career now, you need to keep communication lines open with not only your boss but perhaps his or her boss, your crew, parents, your commercial partners and vendors, and the media when necessary. If you develop good relationships with the key individuals who can help you produce the best fields consistently, the athletes will benefit and so will your career.

Think Spring!



Comments always welcome.
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