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stma in action

BY ERIC SCHRODER

KAFMO conference plays to SRO crowd

Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO) President Dan Douglas' sense of humor is legendary in turf management circles in the same way the Enola Gay is legendary in Hiroshima. But it didn't deter hundreds of Pennsylvania turf managers from attending the STMA chapter's 8th annual KAFMO/PRPS (Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society) Athletic Field Conference last February.

More than 40 exhibitors, many of them sponsors of the event, helped attract a record number of attendees. They also came to hear from speakers that included STMA President Bob Campbell, straight-shooting Penn State assistant professor Dr. Andy McNitt, and professional turf managers Mike Boekholder (Phillies), Jim Koontz (2003 scholastic football FOY winner), and Tony Leonard (Eagles).

Before the presentations, Charlie Vestal, the region's Turface rep, announced that everyone in attendance would be eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship to be used for any turf education format in the name of the late Terry Mellor, brother of Boston Red Sox turf manager Dave Mellor.

KAFMO donations help support research at Penn State, said McNitt, who added that most of his department's funding comes "from crumbs off the golf table."

McNitt's said during his "Maintaining Multi-Use Fields" presentation that personnel is the number one priority in where to spend your money, including paying for continuing ed for your crew. Money for mowing is next. "Mowing has to be in your bud-

get; if you're mowing once a week, mow twice. If you're mowing twice, mow three times," he recommended, adding, "Mow at whatever height you choose but mow at that height all the time, just mow more often when you need to."

Ask booster clubs to help raise money for a new mower, he said, and don't forget about the band's club. Other tips for multi-use fields from McNitt: After personnel and mowing, your next most important expense should be fertilizer, especially nitrogen fertilization. "After the first killing frost in fall is the day to fertilize with a quick-release nitrogen because the roots continue to grow," he said.

"Every day is a good day to seed," said McNitt, "and use high quality seed. Don't worry about mixing varieties . . . you must oversee high-use fields, preferably with ryegrass."

Regarding irrigation, McNitt quotes Dr. Dave Minner: "All fields need some drought stress. If you never see any, you're watering too much."

Bob Campbell spoke eloquently about turf managers being the "guardians of the game" (see p. 7) during his presentation on turf managers' "survival." Among his thoughts: Remember that today's game is the most important one; keep photo records, especially to show bosses what's left behind after concerts, for example, and how you returned field to playability; establish realistic expectations; and finally, Tennessee Volunteer orange-colored field covers actually work better than other colors (Minner's done the research to prove it!) **ST**

president's message (cont'd)

(Continued from page 7) multi-million dollar athletes in the circus atmosphere that surrounds it or by a group of kids who are playing for the pure joy of competition. The game has to be protected. The job of protecting the actual game might be left in our hands, more now than ever before.

In our profession, we continue to accept the challenge of providing a safe and fair field worthy of the game, regardless of constantly increasing challenges. We are the ones who ensure the bases are 90 feet apart, the mound is 10 inches high, and that the football field is exactly 160 feet wide. Things have changed tremendously in sports. Our respect for the game and professionalism must shine through in everything we do.

That's our calling and needs to continue to be our passion. I think it's become a great part of our

challenge. The "game" needs us more than ever right now, and we owe it to the game to preserve its integrity and its fairness.

Part of the new STMA tagline states that we are partners of the game, and in a true sense we are partners with the games we are part of. Maybe it would be more appropriate to say that we are guardians of the game. For this moment in time, we are stewards of special places where memories are made every day for the ages.

Bob