

from the sidelines

My favorite two words: "Spring begins"

After soaking up some sun in San Diego at the STMA conference in late January, I returned to central Pennsylvania, and to Aristotle's four elements of depression: ice, snow, wind, and cold temps. (OK, I made that up.) Now I'm a four-season kinda guy but let's face it, winter is at the bottom of the list. While around here we can usually write off January and February for most outdoor activities, when March rolls around hopes for imminent warm days rise quicker than a Josh Beckett fastball.

So while I eagerly await March 20 ("Spring begins" it says on my calendar), many readers' "off-seasons" are long past. Baseball practice at many universities and colleges started in January, and games have been played for nearly a month already in the South. Here's to an early spring for the rest of us.

Calling all volunteers

Thousands of volunteers also have begun their duties at ballparks across the country's warmer states. Without these folks we might not have any games at all, or at least not nearly as smooth-running stadium operations, at every level.

Jon Richardson, a former Triple A executive, now heads the Peoria (AZ) Diamond Club, a non-profit charitable organization that helps run the spring training facility shared by the Seattle Mariners and San Diego Padres. The wheels are greased for this arrangement by an Arizona statute that exempts teams from paying some amusement taxes if they employ charitable organizations.

"We find our volunteer base through advertisements, though we have a lot of people who come back every year," says Richardson. While local businesspeople run the board, the "worker bees" run the show, including handling parking lots, taking tickets, ushering, counting money, selling programs, working the speed pitch machine, and so on, says Richardson.

"We use 100-150 volunteers for 30 straight days since it's a shared facility," says Richardson, who has a total of 550 volunteers each spring. "We gave away \$20,000 last year in community grants to youth organizations, and we also save taxpayers money because city would otherwise be subsidizing these operations.

"Volunteers do it for camaraderie and friendships mostly," Richardson adds. "It's fun but it is hard work, especially in the parking lots."

Speaking of volunteers, I am proud to announce that this magazine now has an official Editorial Advisory Board. These industry leaders will help us bring you more useful articles from more turf industry experts. Welcome and thanks so much for volunteering to: Mike Andresen, CSFM, Iowa State; Chris Calcaterra, CSFM, Peoria, AZ; Jeff Fowler, Penn State; Boyd Montgomery, CSFM, Sylvania, OH; Pam Sherratt, Ohio State (winner of STMA's 2003 Dr. William Daniels Award); and Suz Trusty, STMA Communications Director.



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