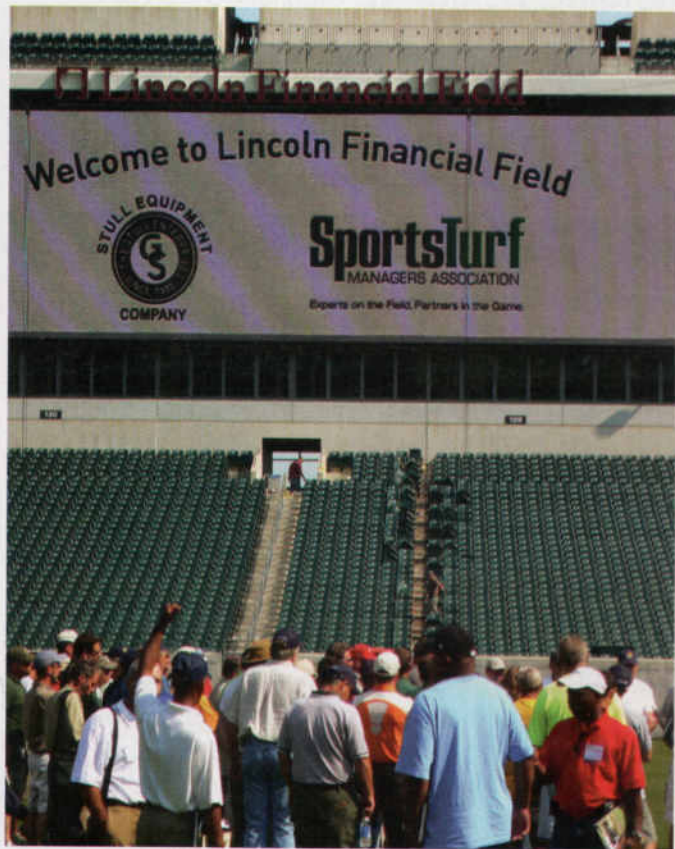


Mid-Atlantic regional event a success

By Kim Heck, STMA Chief Executive Officer



Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field scoreboard welcomed STMA for the June 27 event.



Eagles turf manager Tony Leonard, left, and Dr. John Sorochoan of the University of Tennessee, right, walked around the field discussing management practices.

“Spend time like money,” advised Jeff Fowler, Penn State University Cooperative Extension Program Director, during the STMA Regional Education and Field Day event held in Philadelphia June 27. Fowler was one of five presenters throughout the day and his “7 Habits of Highly Defective Sports Turf Managers” offered tangible strategies to attendees on how to improve their professional and personal lives. Key to that success is to be a better communicator, actively embrace a positive attitude, become a lifelong learner, set and achieve goals and be flexible.

The regional event drew more than 160 people and was supported by six STMA-affiliated chapters: Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO), Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ), Sports Turf Managers of New York (STMONY), Virginia Sports Turf Managers Association (VSTMA), New England Sports Turf Managers Association (NESTMA) and the Chesapeake Chapter of STMA.

Dr. John Sorochoan, University of Tennessee, kicked off the day with a presentation on “Managing Bermudagrass in the Transition Zone.” He acknowledged that the number one challenge to managing athletic fields is cost and recommended that sports turf managers quantify the value of overseeding. Sorochoan also reminded attendees that “You get what you pay for” when purchasing seed and urged attendees to select high quality bermudagrasses that are cold tolerant with high quality turf coverage.

Emcee Dan Douglas (KAFMO Chapter president) kept the participants on schedule as they moved to and from the classrooms to the fields. He helped Fowler administer an agronomic quiz to a team from each chapter, as they competed to win a complimentary full conference registration to the STMA annual conference in San José in January 2009. The Virginia Chapter took the honors and was awarded the conference registration to give to one of its members.

Sorochoan and Tony Leonard, Director of Grounds for the Philadelphia Eagles and host for the day's event, were paired and walked about Lincoln Financial Field discussing its management practices. The field was originally sodded with Kentucky bluegrass sod, after which a DD Grassmaster system was installed. According to Leonard, the field performed very well the first 2 years, but then started to decline quickly throughout seasons three and four. He began removing the top 2 inch to eliminate any organic matter build up and reseeding, but very hot and humid summers led to a weak field going into the football season. After year four, the top 2 inch was grinded again and the field was sprigged with Patriot bermudagrass. The bermudagrass gave the field a chance to be at 100% at the beginning of the football season.

During the 2007 season, the field was sodded over the top of the existing field, and the bermudagrass survived underneath. This allowed for a large percentage of the original bermudagrass to reestablish, and the field was also resprigged in March of this year. Going into this season, the grass is much denser and stronger than it was at this point in 2007, Leonard said.

Leonard's assistant, Dan Shemesh, showed attendees key pieces of equipment that he had stationed in an endzone on the field. This equipment is used by the crew to manage Lincoln Financial Field, Novacare Practice facility and the surrounding landscape and grounds. The equipment includes a spiker for quick aer-

ation, a jumbo spike seeder that is twice the size of a regular seeder to accommodate 200 lbs. of seed at one time for efficient overseeding, and a deep tine aerifier.

Stull Equipment also had its new line of golf course maintenance equipment displayed in the other endzone for attendees to view.

Leonard, with help from two Eagles cheerleaders, conducted a raffle of Eagles clothing and merchandise, followed by a raffle of STMA items.

Sorochan also presented "Cool Season Turfgrass Management." He showed statistics from a study he recently conducted on fertilization rates and mowing frequencies for various cool season grasses. He recommended, "You want to be continuously feeding your turf. With medium frequency of fertilization, density increased."

He also assessed some of the new hybrid bluegrasses, which are great heat, disease and drought tolerant. A tip to help extend the season on sports fields is to use crumb rubber. "It may help wear tolerance by protecting the crowns," says Sorochan.



Mike Boekholder, groundskeeper for the Philadelphia Phillies, presented his pre- and post-concert management philosophy for Citizens Bank Park.

"Aerifying is the easiest maintenance practice for the most benefit," said Mike Boekholder, head groundskeeper at Citizens Bank Park, home to the Philadelphia Phillies. Boekholder gave the final presentation of the day at his field. He explained the unique drainage system that was designed and installed in the sand-based Kentucky bluegrass

field because the field itself is below sea level. He also described the intense pre- and post-concert management practices he implemented to help the field recover from a June Jimmy Buffet concert.

The day concluded with an optional tour of the Eagles' Novacare Practice Facility that is a few blocks away from Lincoln Financial Field. ■

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