

Turfsters' paradise in Phoenix



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I am all thumbs, unfortunately. Even while setting up our mod-est booth at the Sports Turf Managers Association Conference in Phoenix last month, I needed help. And my math and science apti-tude might leave me challenged as a contestant on "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader."

But attending the Conference makes me wish I was a turf manager any-way. You people really love your jobs and it shows, through the sharing of what works and what doesn't to the passion of wanting to be the best you can be.

Heck, even the sweatshirts and jackets you wear are cool, especially since most of them are unavailable to the public. I never fail to generate envious comments whenever I sport the maroon "Texas A&M Field Staff" T-shirt I snared at a SAFE Silent Auction a few years ago.

There aren't any similar meetings. Plenty of the best managers and researchers in the profession (the best on the planet, really) all gathered in one place yet in numbers that enable you to easily seek out individu-als, whether it's to question an expert or buy a beer for a new friend. Mega kudos to the Conference Committees, Kim Heck and her staff at STMA headquarters, and David Rosenberg, Andrea Rollin, and Liz Zalewski from the STMA Show office.

The Jacobsen-sponsored golf tournament, which benefits SAFE (Foundation for Safer Athletic Field Environments), didn't get iced out this year but instead we had a chance to relax and enjoy the warm desert sun. Rumor had it that Jake's Monty Montague and his scoring system denied yet again a victory for Steve LeGros, Dan Douglas, Luke Yoder and Bobby Piccolo . . .

Another pre-Conference highlight was the Seminar on Wheels tour, which included a stop at the Super Bowl venue, where Tim Peterson of the Cardinals and the illustrious George Toma held court on the movable turf outside the stadium. Yes, I touched the turf on which Tom Petty walked!

Equally impressive was the Rio Vista Regional Community Park in Peoria. Not only were the fields looking good but there was a large skate park and a new community center, which features state-of-the-art work-out equipment and a beautiful gymnasium. Heads were shaking when we learned that residents pay only \$25 a month for memberships. Chris Calcaterra, STMA treasurer and organizer of the tour, and his neighbors must pay an arm and leg in taxes to subsidize that place.

I don't have space here to describe the real meat of the Conference, the educational sessions and exhibit hall; rather, I suggest that you make pre-liminary plans now to attend next year's event in San Jose, CA. Sports turf managers are a lucky bunch to have these opportunities.

Now, where's my "Installing a light bulb" manual?

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