

STMA celebrates 100th certification

The Certified Sports Field Managers (CSFM) program has certified its 100th person, Patrick Jonas, CSFM, from St. Andrew's Parks and Playgrounds, Charleston, SC.



The CSFM program was created in 2000 to signify and document the knowledge, skills and abilities of sports turf managers. The program validates a commitment to personal and professional excellence. Although 9 years have elapsed since the program began, the reasons for pursuing certification revolve around validation of professionalism.

STMA's first certified member, Ross Kurcab, CSFM, says, "I wanted to get certified to test and challenge myself to be a better sports turf manager. Now, I have the credentials to prove my competence, professionalism, and dedication."

Jonas cites a similar motivation, "I see certification as a way to add value to my employer. My agency provides me the opportunity to attend the STMA conference, and I want to take my professionalism as high as I can for them."

The drive for professionalism

Tony Koski, Ph.D., professor and extension turf specialist at Colorado State University, and Mary Owen, extension turf specialist at the University of Massachusetts, have been involved in the creation and development of the CSFM program since its inception. When asked about the impetus to create the program, they both point to the need to validate sports turf management as a profession outside of the turf industry.

"At that time there was recognition with-

in the ranks that sports turf management had at some point become a profession, but that recognition did not extend to the rest of the world—players, coaches, owners, administrators, and the public," Koski says. "It was apparent that we needed to not only recognize professionalism, but had to find a way to measure, maintain, encourage and promote it within sports turf management."

Owen concurs, and recalls the first committee meeting about certification. "It was in 1996 in Colorado," she says. "Members told educators that sports turf management needed to be recognized as a valued profession. Henry Indyk really took leadership of this idea. He paid attention what sports turf managers were doing and saying, and listened to their concerns," says Owen. "He believed certification to be the vehicle to demonstrate to the world that sports turf managers are professionals."

Kurcab was also involved with the creation of the program, and he couldn't agree more. "Competence is key in our industry, and sometimes the image to others outside the industry is that this business is for low-pay, unskilled workers. We all know better."

In addition to Dr. Indyk, Owen, Koski, and Kurcab, the original Certification Committee members included Mike Schiller, CSFM, Dale Getz, CSFM, Floyd Perry, Dr. A.J. Powell, Dr. David Minner, and Bob Patt.

From the beginning, this committee realized that this would not be a 'rubber-stamp' type of certification. "It would be rigorous and not for everyone," says Koski.

Owen acknowledges that developing a balanced program was key. "We placed a high value on field experience, and we knew that getting the right balance between experience and education would make our certification a strong program for the industry," she says.

Koski agrees. "By recognizing those who strive to always be at the 'top of their game', the bar is raised for those working in sports turf management." He adds that everyone benefits when you view your work

as a profession, and not just as a job, especially the employer.

"Employers of a CSFM benefit because those working with a CSFM are likely to know more and perform at a higher level and, most importantly, the players using a CSFM-managed facility can have confidence in its safety and playability," Koski says.

Some sports turf managers may have initially viewed the certification program as being developed for the managers of professional stadiums. Koski says that isn't the case. "When you look at the demographics of our 100 CSFMs that clearly hasn't happened," Koski says. "It is just as important that the field be safe for the 5-year old soccer player as for the professional athlete, and the CSFM program clearly recognizes that truth."

During the previous decade, the sports turf industry has been moving from an indistinct structure to a more significant one, as improved leadership, networking, and the certification program continue to elevate the profession. A result is that sports turf management as a profession is more recognizable. Industry advances make our certification program even more important today.

According to Koski, "Technology changes daily in the turf management world. The CSFM has to keep up-to-date on those advances through continuing education," he says.

Kurcab views the continuing education component as a logical extension of being a sports turf professional. "I've always said that if one has the passion for this line of work, then he or she should have a powerful curiosity to continue to learn."

Higher compensation

In addition to personal and professional affirmation, compensation levels for certified members are tracking higher. According to the STMA 2008 Compensation and Benefits Report, on average, certified sports field managers

are compensated at a higher rate than non-certified, especially at the higher salary levels. Eighteen percent of STMA members make more than \$75,000. Twenty-seven percent of certified members make more than \$75,000.

In addition to higher pay, Koski says, "As employers begin to recognize the benefits of employing a CSFM, competition for the best jobs will give an edge to those who are certified." ■

Are You Ready to Test?

Those pursuing certification first have to accumulate 40 points to be eligible to test. Points are earned from formal education and experience or from experience only. Once 40 points are attained, applicants take a four-part exam covering agronomics, sports specific, pest management, and administration. Those successfully completing each section at an 80% pass rate achieve the CSFM designation. Recertification is required every 3 years, and it requires continuing education and industry service.

Use these charts to determine if you have the 40 points to qualify to take the exam.

Education	Education Points
Advanced Degree	24
Bachelor's - Turf Related	16
Bachelor's - Other Non-Turf	8
Associate's - Turf Related	8
Associate's - Other Non-Turf	2
No Degree	0

Experience	Experience Points
Head Sports Turf Manager	6 pts./year
Asst. Sports Turf Manager	3 pts./year
Sports Turf Crew	1 pt./year
**Golf Course Supt.	3 pts./year
**Asst Golf Course Supt.	1.5 pts./year

If you have any questions on your readiness, please contact STMA Headquarters, 1-800-323-3875. STMA also has a practice exam on www.stma.org; click on "Certification" to take that exam.

STMA awards its most prestigious honors

The STMA presented its highest honors, the Founders Awards, during the January Conference's concluding banquet. The awards are named after the four founders of STMA: Dick Ericson, Dr. William H. Daniel, George Toma, and Harry Gill, and each award has separate and distinct judging criteria. Those nominated are evaluated confidentially and independently by the STMA Board of Directors, and winners are not notified until their name is announced during the banquet.

Mike Tarantino from Poway Unified School District in Poway, CA received the Dick Ericson award, which is given to a sports turf manager who positively impacts the sports turf industry and exhibits effective team leadership. His nomination referenced his professionalism, team leadership, a commitment to improving the industry, and his contributions to STMA committee service.

Founder Dr. William Daniel set the standard for educator and researcher involvement in the STMA, and created a partnership between sports turf managers and educators and researchers. This award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the sports turf industry through his or her research, teaching or extension outreach. Dr. Grady Miller, North Carolina State University was presented this honor in recognition for his substantial research on sports field management techniques during drought conditions, his accessibility to sports turf managers and his authorship of numerous books and scientific manuscripts dedicated to the profession.

The George Toma Golden Rake Award, which acknowledges an individual's strong work ethic and job performance, was presented to David Reiss from Wasatch County School District in Heber City, UT. He is described as an outstanding turf man, an advocate of excellence and accountability in his profession, and his nomination acclaimed his enthusiasm and dedication to providing high quality sports and practice fields.

The Harry C. Gill Memorial Award was presented to former STMA board president Bob Campbell, CSFM, from the University of Tennessee. The Gill Award recognizes an individual for their hard work in the sports turf industry and acknowledges their dedication and service to the STMA. Campbell was honored for his extraordinary commitment to the profession. His sports field management practices have raised the bar for all sports turf managers, and he is lauded as a mentor to many in the industry. His leadership helped to navigate STMA through turbulent times, and it is through his leadership that the association is strong and vibrant today. ■

Playing Conditions Index ready for use

STMA rolled out the Playing Conditions Index (PCI) package at its annual conference in January. In development for 2 years and piloted during 2008, the instrument is ready for broad use by the STMA membership.

Developed to assess the playability of your fields, the PCI is used to provide a snapshot of your fields' playability at a specific point in time. The continued use of the assessment tool provides invaluable information to the sports turf manager and can help guide field management practices, assist with communication to user groups, can help to substantiate the need for more resources, and as needed provides a way to provide information to the media relations department. The package contains a Media Advisory Bulletin with instructions to help convey information on field conditions and its effect on athlete performance to sports information professionals on game days.



STMA in action

This benefit is available to members only online at www.STMA.org. Log in to members only, and under the members-only drop down box, click on the PCI. It is also available in booklet format. Please call STMA, 1-800-323-3875 for your free copy, or email your request to PCI@STMA.org. ■

Penn State, Mt. San Antonio win Student Challenge

Students were able to take advantage of many activities specifically geared to them including a student forum, student lunch, and the Fifth Annual STMA Student Challenge presented in partnership with the SAFE Foundation and Platinum Sponsor Hunter Industries. Through the generosity of SAFE, the Student Challenge provides the winning 2-year team and the winning 4-year team each with a \$4,000 grant to fund a practical learning lab at their college or university. An event record 108 students, representing 22 colleges, universities, and technical schools, entered a total of 31 teams. Teams of up to four students participated in a multiple choice exam on athletic turf and sports field management topics and identified plants, insects, diseases and weeds, as well as performing a written case study. Ninety-nine students and 30 teams com-

peted in the event in 2008. Hunter Industries' continued sponsorship picks up the tab for all Student Challenge competitors' STMA Conference registration.

The winning team from the Four Year Competition was Pennsylvania State University Blue Team 009, whose members were Tanner Del Valle, Matt Elmore, Nicholas Gialloretto, and Nicholas Leviere. Del Valle and Elmore are the first two students to successfully defend their Student Challenge title. Penn State's White Team 008 finished third. The University of Tennessee made a very strong showing with Team 014 finishing second out of 21 total teams in the 4-Year competition.

Ten teams competed in the 2-Year competition, with Mt. San Antonio College Team 102 taking top honors, making them the first school to win the 2-Year competition twice. Teammates Patrick Escalera, Geoff Miller, Chaz Perea, and Hector Ramirez studied intensely leading up to the exam. Second place went to Penn State's 103 and third place was taken home by Mt. San Antonio College Team 101.

In addition to their \$4,000 grant, the two first place teams' will also have their team name etched in the traveling Student Challenge Cup; receive replicas of the Cup and individual medals; and provide an article to be presented in an official STMA publication. Second and Third place winners received plaques and medals. ■

“Marquis de Sod” turns 80



STMA President Abby McNeal, CSFM and George Toma, one of the association's founding members.

George Toma, one of the Sports Turf Managers Association's founders and arguably the most famous groundskeeper in history, turned 80 last month, just 2 days after working his 43rd (that's all of them) Super Bowl in Tampa.

According to a story in the *Kansas City Star*, the National Football League threw a party for Toma about midnight on the 50-yard line of Raymond James Stadium, a few hours after the most entertaining Super Bowl of all time. “We didn't get home until 3 in the morning,” Toma said in the story.

Anyone who has met Toma knows of his boundless energy that shows no sign of dissipating at an age that finds many men happy to play a round of golf, with a cart no less. His famous “And then some” spirit has spurred countless turf managers to go beyond what is expected of them professionally.

Toma told the *Star* that when Pittsburgh's James Harrison was rumbling

100 yards with the game-turning interception at the end of the first half, his proximity almost got him flattened. “I saw him intercept the pass and I was watching up on the JumboTron. All of a sudden, one of the Steelers' executives grabbed me and pulled me back and the pylon comes flying towards me. (Harrison) was lying on the ground, so I picked up the pylon and put it back.”

His hometown paper's tribute continued: “Hard work is really all Toma has ever known. His early biography reads like David Copperfield. It almost sounds made up to say that Toma was born poor in a Depression-era, coal-mining town in Pennsylvania. He got his first job, on a vegetable farm, at the age of 10. He became a groundskeeper at 13, giving him almost seven decades in the field in which he still occupies the summit.”

Happy Birthday, George, many happy returns! ■