

Notes from STMA SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

THE 2011 STMA SOUTHEAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN KNOXVILLE, TN June 15-16 included tours of the softball and soccer complex at the University of Tennessee as well as “walk-the-field” tours of 102,455-seat Neyland Stadium and Lindsey Nelson Stadium, where the Volunteer baseball team plays. That tour included the Vols’ football indoor practice facility that larger than many airplane hangars, and the locker rooms, workout facilities and recruiting centers for both facilities.

The event also included a 3-hour outdoor trade show on the site of the University’s new Center for Athletic Field Safety (CAFS), where attendees got up close and personal with products of 31 exhibitors, including some equipment test drives.

Dr. John Sorochan, associate professor of turfgrass science at Tennessee and Director of the CAFS, and doctoral student Adam Thoms introduced attendees to the Center, which includes 60 30 x 15-foot “mini-football” plots that include every type of synthetic field in use today as well as natural turf species on native soil, sand build-up and sand-cap bases. Sorochan said they will be testing in field conditions, looking not only at traffic issues but also injuries, specifically studying the interactions between turf and cleats (and other shoe types), and also will be monitoring environmental conditions under the surfaces.

Thoms said they plan to treat turf plots as any turf manager would, and that studies would include stormwater runoff. “We will be looking at what is coming off the fields,” Sorochan said. “And collecting water samples to see what’s in it.”

The Center officially opened July 13 and is partially funded by AstroTurf’s \$3.5 million donation.

Dr. Grady Miller of North Carolina State and Eric Fasbender, CSFM, of LSU presented on field painting. Miller has been studying paint and its effects on turf. He said

for example that red paint reduces photosynthesis by 75%, which is “like shade.” He cited data regarding testing the red and white colors of the Southeastern Conference (SEC) logo that showed “an amazing difference between the two colors” regarding turf recovery.

Miller said the worst colors for turf are black, “Duke” blue, and garnet. His studies



>> THIS IS A BAG OF DEBRIS collected from the turf at Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis, IN home of the NFL’s Colts. It was on display at the Regional Conference by Jacob Maynard of FieldGroomers; part of his business is cleaning synthetic surfaces.

are continuing and will turn to application techniques and making colors using other colors in the spectrum.

Miller said an airless sprayer can pay for itself because it can be used on surfaces other than turf such as to line parking lots though he knows aerosol is still used extensively, especially at the high school level. Miller said the chemistries in both airless and aerosol paints are similar for testing purposes.

Fasbender said he verticuts his endzones in Baton Rouge and his logo areas after each season to help get out some of the built-up paint out of the rootzone. He said the light reflection/absorption of your field paint color can make a difference in your paint choice; he said the purple endzone always

comes back faster than the yellow endzone at Tiger Stadium.

He emphasized that to keep your airless sprayer functioning properly it must be cleaned regularly. Another tip was gluing guards on your stencils to hold them up and not crush any grass. And he said keeping aerosol paint as a back up is smart, especially if you need to apply in light rain.

COVERS

Dr. Mike Goatley of Virginia Tech and incoming president of the STMA, and Jesse Pritchard, CSFM, sports turf manager for the University of Virginia, presented on turf covers. They held up examples as they discussed different types of cover material and different uses for each. A lightweight and popular design was shown as Goatley said it lets in 65% sunlight but can still keep the ground moist if you’re growing in after a renovation or seeding. These were not recommended as winter protective covers however.

A geotextile design was a heavier cover that will normally stay in place easily; their orange-colored version is known as a good color for turf growth. Goatley said if you keep Kentucky bluegrass under this cover the grass will be green but you will pay a “post-cover syndrome” price.

Another cover, a woven polypropylene, is not a rain tarp but works the same way since it prevents moisture from getting to your turf.

Goatley said one of the best uses for covers is traffic management. “If you put down a tarp, you will keep people off your field,” he said, noting that tarps are often on in northern Virginia from November through March.

In fall, he said you need at least 50% sunlight to get through your turf cover and that dark-colored covers aren’t good for growing later in the season. In spring when you want the sun to get through is another time to use the lighter covers. ■