

From the Sidelines



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STMA membership is smart investment

NEXT MONTH when I join members of the Sports Turf Managers Association Long Beach, CA for their Conference and Exhibition it will be my 11th such meeting. One thing from all those events that sticks out for me is the knowledge passing hands informally in hallways or during lunch, and yes, at the bars.

Sure the formal education sessions and programs constructed by STMA committees comprise the best package available anywhere for sports turf management. The conversations I refer to are icing on the cake and I believe a major reason people join STMA and, especially, come to the annual meeting. Many successful turf professionals at all levels have advanced their careers through STMA education opportunities as well as capitalized on connections made at these meetings.

STMA moves their conferences around the country so I realize it can be tough to make every one but as a national member you have access to just about all the information presented at them anyway. Members also can use the Turfgrass Information File at Michigan State as well numerous reports and studies from STMA committees and task forces. Another member benefit is a job listing/recruitment tool for potential employees and interns.

And of course there is this magazine, the STMA e-newsletter, distance-learning discounts, available scholarships, CSFM certification, and the award programs including in members' benefits. I've heard that Field of the Year winners suddenly find themselves much more appreciated when the boss proudly displays the cover from *SportsTurf* featuring their field.

A final observation: there is a direct correlation between professional success and serving in the leadership of STMA. I don't know which one drives the other. The presidents and board members I've spoken with over the years share a passion for improving the profession and help infuse that commitment into the younger leaders now populating the board. It's a great time to get involved in leading the STMA.

UnHappy Valley

Long-time readers of this space may recall my flying the Penn State flag on several occasions, mostly about the great turfgrass program they run up Route 322 about 80 miles from my house. But one column, written in January 2002, while still under the ironic "The Front Office" banner, was titled "Joe Paterno, my hero." In it I wrote, "An honest man doesn't believe in excuses" referring to the coach's saying his team wasn't very good.

Unfortunately now no greater example exists of doing 10,000 things right but being known for one thing you got wrong than the revelations and allegations that have severely tarnished Coach Paterno's legacy.

For many years legions of we Penn Staters pointed with pride to our university's athletic reputation for more degrees with fewer shenanigans. That high ground has been permanently leveled. I feel Coach Paterno and others let us down. But my trust remains high in the collective will of the university's faculty, students, and alumni to never forget the victims or the lessons they have taught us.

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