

Ask a CSFM

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Benefits of certification verified

Editor's note: *This is another installment on how becoming a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) can benefit turf managers professionally as well as improve their facilities*



How did you prepare for the CSFM Exam?

McNeal: I studied the different areas of the test by reviewing the University of Georgia course (Principles of Turfgrass Management), reading several recommended text books, and reviewing the bullet points specific to areas of the test. I made a giant notebook of notes from the materials that I studied and then carried that with me to review throughout the day. Once I felt like I knew the information I signed up to take the test.

How did you approach your employer to support your certification, both financially and in the time needed to prepare for the exam?

McNeal: I had great support from my employer, since I was working for Ross Kurcab (the very first CSFM). He was very supportive and encouraging of the achieving the certification. He provided me with tips to study and areas to spend a little more time on. The Denver Broncos as an organization had three CSFM's during my 5 years there (including new STMA president Troy Smith from the team's practice facility).

Why did you decide to pursue certification?

McNeal: I pursued certification to raise my own "bar" and to personally challenge myself to be a better sports turf manager.

How has certification helped your career?

McNeal: I believe that being a CSFM I hold more credibility when applying for a sports turf position. I believe that it shows a potential employer that I am committed to the profession, that I have the necessary skills to be a leader, and I have the ability to oversee the maintenance operations of their athletic facilities. My CSFM also shows that I am an industry leader and that I am committed to continued learning and industry involvement. ■

Purdue wins 4-year, Mt. San Antonio College 2-year in Student Challenge

MORE THAN 140 STUDENTS attended the 22nd Annual Conference in Austin. Students were able to take advantage of many activities specifically geared to them including a student networking session, student lunch and educational track, and the STMA Student Challenge presented in partnership with Founding Partner Hunter Industries and the Foundation for Safer Athletic Fields for Everyone (SAFE).

Of the students in attendance, more than 80% competed in the Seventh Annual STMA Student Challenge. Through a generous donation from the SAFE Foundation, the winning 2-year and 4-year teams each receive a \$4,000 grant to fund a practical learning lab at their college or university. More than 110 students, representing 23 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, and irrigation parts, as well as answering a series of challenging short answer questions about given scenarios.

Purdue University's Team 415 won the 4-year competition between 23 teams. The coach was Tracy Tudor and student competitors were Joey Gerking, Zachary Peterson, Justin Shirley and Cody Whitis; they beat Virginia Tech Team 405 by only eight points. Third place in the Four-Year event was captured by Iowa State Team 408.

Nine teams competed in the Two-Year Competition, with Mt. San Antonio College Team 206 taking top honors. Mt. San Antonio students Wade Anderseck, Patrick Escalera, Chaz Perea and Tom Skelton, led by professor Brian Scott, edged Penn State Team 207 by

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one point. Maryland Team 419 brought home third place. STMA, SAFE, and Hunter would like to draw special attention to Kirkwood Community College Team 203 teammates Jake Newman, Colin Stuhr, Jacob Travis and Travis Venditti and their coach, Troy McQuillen, for grace and sportsmanship in the face of adversity.

Hunter Industries' continued sponsorship helped to defray some of the Student Challenge competitors' conference costs. Again this year, the results of the Student Challenge were announced out of the Hunter booth in the exhibition, drawing more than 150 people onto the floor in the late hours of the show.

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. At the Annual STMA Awards Banquet, they received replicas of the Cup and individual medals and will provide an article to be presented in an official STMA publication sometime in 2011. Second and Third place winners received plaques and medals. ■