

# From the Sidelines



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## Jobs, jobs, jobs

**A**S I WRITE the US unemployment rate is 8.8%, using the following to define “unemployed”: Persons who do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. You could drop a bag of dirt from the sky anywhere in the country and probably hit a politician who just promised someone he or she is doing everything possible to create jobs.

This spring turfgrass graduates from 2 and 4-year programs are entering this dicey job market. Here is some good news/bad news, from email exchanges I had with Robbie Dworkin, assistant groundskeeper for the Fort Wayne Tin Caps, who graduated in December from Ohio State; and Cale Bigelow, an agronomy professor at Purdue, who helps shepherd turf students through the job search gauntlet.

Dworkin said there were four important factors he had in his corner to get hired into the turf industry: education, passion, willingness, and previous experience. “Without those four things I would not be where I am today,” he responded. “Another factor is work ethic, along with involvement in your school’s turf club, local turf chapters, as well as STMA. Attendance at the past four STMA conferences was vital in networking and developing relationships.

“When preparing for my first job interview the best thing that I did was research the stadium and the organization. In the interview I asked questions that were important to me. Upon being offered the position, my decision was made easier by the answer I received to my question, ‘How dedicated is the front office to keeping the field nice and are the resources in place to do so?’ The mindset I had going into the interviewing process was that it should be more of a conversation than an interview.

“My advice to turfgrass graduates looking for full time employment in the sports turf industry would have to start with, ‘Do not wait until the last minute!’ Make sure your resume is in order, send them out early, and check the STMA website daily. Have a cover letter that you can tweak for the job you are applying to. Remember, you are competing against fellow students around the country. Have the will to win.”

More good news from Dr. Bigelow: “All our students are finding jobs. Most are entry level, and sports turf and golf continue to be the major employers. For the folks graduating in May, two have baseball jobs, four have golf assistant jobs, one has a landscape job, one is joining industry, and one is undecided but leaning toward a super’s job at a low budget course.”

And the bad news: “What is beginning to be a troubling trend is the loss of some very talented former students from the turf industry. I have had four strong students contact me over the past 4 months to tell me they were leaving the turf industry, either to go to grad school (MBA, etc.) or move into something different, such as financial planning. I suppose they just got sick of the inability to move up very quickly and/or were still making low 30’s and working 65+ hour weeks with no weekends and holidays.”

# SportsTurf

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