

More educational opportunities & networking highlight 24th Annual STMA Conference & Exhibition

APPROXIMATELY 1,600 PEOPLE participated in the Sports Turf Managers Association's 24th Annual Conference and Exhibition last month in sunny Daytona Beach, FL. The crowd included sports turf managers, academics, and other industry professionals from across the globe.

STMA's new format for Daytona Beach included STMA Academy and the addition of a number of new educational tracks, as well as changing times for several events; this reporter found nothing but positive reviews of the new format in informal chats with attendees and exhibitors.

STMA President Dr. Mike Goatley made a point to congratulate Martin Kaufman, CSFM, Conference Chairman, for his diligence and tireless effort in organizing the Conference. And congratulations from this corner to the STMA Headquarters staff for another smoothly running show, set in a perfect venue and surrounding area. Way to go, CEO Kim Heck, Kristen Alt-house, Leah Craig, Nora Dunnaway, and Shant Thomas.

Simon Gumbrell, sales director of Campey Turf Care Systems, travelled from Great Britain to exhibit and said he was pleased with the attention his product line received during the revamped trade show hours. Mike Davis, president of Greens-Groomer, said his product line, designed mainly to maintain synthetic turf surfaces, was also drawing a lot of attention, and John Walther, vice president, Barenbrug USA, credited his company's increased sales in the US on their presence at the past few STMA Conferences.

This correspondent attended as many education sessions as time allowed and this year the best I witnessed was "Athletic Field Use and Maintenance Planning" by Rebecca Auchter, the manager of grounds maintenance for Cranberry (PA) Township. Her professional and organized approach to dealing with issues that face most sports turf managers focused on creating and managing expectations of those whose agendas are often contrary to what is best for fields. I recommend checking STMA.org for more information from her presentation.

FOUNDERS' AWARD WINNERS

Friday night's Awards Banquet was topped off with presentation of the industry's most prestigious awards—STMA's Founders' Awards. Honored were:

Dick Ericson Award - **Amy Fouty, CSFM**, Michigan State

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Director - Higher Education Jeff Salmond, CSFM, Director of Athletic Field Management, University of Oklahoma



Director - At Large (appointed) Mike Tarantino, Director, Maintenance & Operations, Poway (CA) Unified SD



Director - At Large (elected) Tim Van Loo, CSFM, Manager of Athletic Turf & Grounds, Iowa State University

University Intercollegiate Athletics; George Toma “Golden Rake” Award - **Michael Boettcher**, Milwaukee Brewers; Dr. William H. Daniel Award - **Elizabeth Guertal, PhD**, Auburn University; and Harry C. Gill Memorial Award – **Richard Moffitt**, Moffitt & Associates, LLC.

PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP

STMA President Dr. Mike Goatley said, “This year we have two very deserving recipients of this award. The basis of good leadership is honorable character and selfless service, and these two award winners have gone far above typical service to STMA. Both have served their local chapters; both have been presenters at our national conferences; both have volunteered on many STMA committees; both have served on your national STMA board of directors; both helped to guide STMA through its early years; and both reached a milestone in 2012. It is with great pleasure that I present the STMA Presidents Award for Leadership to newly retired members **David Rulli** and **Steve Wightman**.

GRANT & SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Nik Wooldridge of Colorado State University was a double winner this year. Wooldridge, who interned at Fenway Park in Boston, earned the 2012 Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant as well as a James R. Watson Scholarship, presented by The Toro Company, for 4-year institutions. The James R. Watson Scholarship program was established in 1998 in honor of Dr. James R. Watson, a long-time agronomist at Toro.

Two graduate winners, both from University of Tennessee at Knoxville, also won scholarships; **Kyley Dickson** won the James R. Watson Scholarship, and **Eric Reasor** won the other graduate scholarship.

Gabriel Mitchell from San Diego State University and member of the Southern California Chapter of STMA won the The Terry Mellor Continuing Education Grant, sponsored by Turface Athletics. This grant funds an STMA affiliated chapter member’s attendance to the Conference and honors the importance of continuing education that Terry strongly supported his entire life.

SAFE’s top scholarship in a 2-year program is named after Fred Grau, the first turf-

grass extension specialist in the US. The 2013 Fred Grau winner was **Casey Gural** from Guilford Technical Community College, Jamestown, NC. SAFE scholarship winners from a 4-year institutions were: **Tylor Meppelink**, Michigan State University; **Jacob Leadbetter**, Penn State University; **Kevin Hansen**, Iowa State University; and **Andrew Wilhelm**, Purdue University.

STMA ACADEMY

A major change in this year’s Conference was the introduction of the STMA Academy, as well the addition of a number of new educational tracks. “Members through the years have asked for a higher level of opportunities to learn beyond the normal 1-hour sessions we offer,” said Education Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Fowler, an extension director and turfgrass specialist for Penn State. “So we developed the Academy, which allows students and instructors to get more in-depth on a particular topic. And we plan to build on that education in future conferences. The feedback I’ve received has been very positive.”

SAFE FOUNDATION

The Foundation for Safer Athletic Fields (SAFE), STMA’s charitable foundation with a mission “To enrich communities through championing safe, sustainable sports and recreation fields for all athletes” raised more than \$35,000 during the Conference. Events included the 13th Annual Golf Tournament, played at the LPGA International’s Legends Course, a Casino Night held in conjunction with the Welcome Reception, a Live Auction before Friday night’s Awards Banquet, and Silent Auctions on the trade show floor Thursday and Friday. Raffle tickets also were on sale throughout the Conference for prizes.

Live Auction items included Graco Field-Lazer S90, custom stencils from Pioneer Athletics, a GreensGroomer, a Toro 30” mower and a Toro blower, Jacobsen logo’d bar stools, being a groundskeeper for a day with the Seattle Mariners, and a full-page ad in this magazine.

Golf hole sponsors included Carolina Green; Diamond Pro/TXI; Luck Stone Company; JSM Services; DryJect, Inc.; and Turfco.

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STMA Conference

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SAFE Conference sponsors included: Barenbrug USA; Covermaster; Diamond Pro; Hunter Industries; John Deere; Toro; TurfNet Sports; and World Class Athletic Surfaces.

SEMINARS ON WHEELS

This year there were two tours, one full day and one half day; both tours ended up at the famous Daytona International Speedway, where they were treated to a bus ride around the track and a tour through pit row, as well as hearing from Daytona turf manager Sam Newpher on how his use of two different grasses creates the stunning visual in front of the main grandstand, among other topics.

“Our overall reaction was great for both tours. We had more than 210 people and several of those who came into Daytona Beach Tuesday morning expressed how happy they were that we had the half-day option,” said Tour Subcommittee chairman Jeff Salmond, CSFM, director of athletic field management at the University of Oklahoma. “The sites selected were well-received, especially Daytona Speedway. We all were just ‘wowed’ by the work Sam Newpher and his crew does with what they call their ‘football field’. The entire experience was memorable simply by being inside such an historic facility.”

“I’m looking forward to identifying other interesting sites beyond the usual when making our selections for next year’s tours in San Antonio,” Salmond said.

David Pinnonseault, CSFM, CPRP, public grounds superintendent, Town of Lexington (MA) and President-Elect of STMA, led the half-day tour. “Mike Geiger of the Daytona Cubs did a great job explaining how he and his small staff, with a limited budget, produce a quality surface. Lots of people on the tour could directly relate to those circumstances; we especially appreciated learning how Mike works with city officials and local golf supers to borrow equipment.”

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Hunter Industries and the SAFE Foundation once again sponsored the STMA Student Challenge, featuring 34 teams. As the indefatigable Lynda Wightman from Hunter explained to the closing session crowd before announcing the 2013 winners, the Challenge consists of several parts, including an exam with multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, reading passages, and short answer sections. Some questions require physical or visual identification of plant materials, pests, supplies, tools, equipment, irrigation components, ballfield soils and materials, and more.

Wightman added that the Challenge began in 2005 with 16 teams and that the first winning team, from Penn State, included current STMA education manager Kristen Althouse.

This year’s winners were:

2-Year Division

1st place: Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Myrtle Beach, SC - Team 202

2nd place: Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, CA - Team 203

Scholarships



NIK WOOLDRIDGE of Colorado State University won the 2012 Gary Vanden Berg Internship Grant as well as a James R. Watson Scholarship. At left is former SAFE Chairman Boyd Montgomery of Toro.



KYLE DICKSON, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, won a graduate student James R. Watson Scholarship. At left is former SAFE chairman Boyd Montgomery of Toro.



ERIC REASOR won a SAFE Foundation graduate scholarship, presented to him here by Toro’s Boyd Montgomery.



GABRIEL MITCHELL, right, from San Diego State University won the The Terry Mellor Continuing Education Grant. Presenter is Boyd Montgomery of Toro.



The 2013 Fred Grau Scholarship winner was **CASEY GURAL** from Guilford Technical Community College, Jamestown, NC. At left is presenter Boyd Montgomery of Toro.



TYLOR MEPPELINK, Michigan State, SAFE Scholarship winner on the right with former SAFE chairman Boyd Montgomery of Toro, left.



JACOB LEADBETTER, Penn State, SAFE Scholarship winner, right, with Toro’s Boyd Montgomery.



KEVIN HANSEN, Iowa State, SAFE Scholarship winner, right, with Boyd Montgomery, past chairman of the SAFE Foundation.



ANDREW WILHELM, Purdue University, SAFE Scholarship winner, right, with Boyd Montgomery of Toro presenting.



STMA PRESIDENT DR. MIKE GOATLEY poses with Student Challenge 4-year Division winners from the University of Maryland-Team 412. From left to right: Ryan Higgins, Justin Patenaude, Matt Park, and Scott Hosier. Their coach is Dr. Justin Mathias.



STMA PRESIDENT DR. MIKE GOATLEY poses with Student Challenge 2-year Division winners from Horry-Georgetown Technical College-Team 202. From left to right: Kyle Hamilton, Kevin Nason, Bradley Stokes, and Jay Richardson. Their coach is Ashley Wilkinson. The students also received coaching from adjunct faculty member Corey Russell, who is the sports turf manager for the Myrtle Beach Pelicans.

3rd place: Penn State University - Team 204

4-Year Division

1st place: University of Maryland - Team 412

2nd place: Penn State University - Team 407

3rd place: Virginia Tech University - Team 421

INNOVATION AWARD

The 2013 STMA Award for Commercial Innovation was presented by STMA Commercial Vice President Rene Asprion of Diamond Pro to Paul Carlson, president of Green Source, Inc., Plainfield, IL. Carlson said the winning product, called Sidekick, was designed as an attachment to sod installation machines so as not to require an additional machine on the job site. “We needed it to be powerful and compact, mobile, and easy to operate and not require an additional operator. We also needed it to not damage to the existing grade and more importantly, to the sod being installed,” Carlson said. “That meant it could not touch the grass. This was accomplished instead by using the ground force to keep the pushing edge completely square with the edge of the sod.”

Products entered are judged by the STMA Awards Committee to substantially enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of sports turf managers, and to make playing surfaces safer and more playable. ■

Award Winners



AMY FOUTY, CSFM, athletic turf manager, Michigan State, receives the Dick Ericson Award from last year’s winner, Darian Daily.



MICHAEL BOETTCHER, right, grounds manager for the Milwaukee Brewers, receives the George Toma “Golden Rake” Award from banquet emcee Tim Moore, CSFM.



ELIZABETH GUERTEL, PHD, right, Auburn University professor of turfgrass and nutrient management, receives the Dr. William H. Daniel Award from last year’s winner, Leah Brilman, PhD.



RICHARD MOFFITT, right, Moffitt & Associates, LLC, receives the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award from last year’s winner, Mike Andresen, CSFM.



RECENTLY RETIRED DAVE RULLI, shown here at an earlier awards banquet, was named one of two recipients of the President’s Award for Leadership.



STEVE WIGHTMAN, right, former turf manager for the San Diego Chargers, was honored with a President’s Award for Leadership by STMA President Dr. Mike Goatley.



PAUL CARLSON, left, president of Green Source, Inc., Plainfield, IL won the 2013 STMA Award for Commercial Innovation. The winning product is Sidekick, an attachment to sod installation machines that uses ground force to keep the pushing edge square with the edge of the sod.



CATHY BRADLEY, Executive Director of the Baseball Tomorrow Fund, has assumed leadership of the SAFE Foundation as its Chairman of the Board of Trustees.