

STMA Awards Committee highlights process

THE SPORTS TURF MANAGERS ASSOCIATION AWARDS COMMITTEE is responsible for judging three awards programs annually. These programs are the Field of the Year, Minor League Baseball Sports Turf Manager of the Year and the Innovative Awards. Each program has its own program rules, submittal procedures and judging criteria.

Field of the Year

Awards are made in baseball, football, soccer, softball, and sporting grounds in the following applicable categories: schools or parks, professional, and collegiate. Two hundred and fifteen fields have been selected to receive this honor since the program began in 1988. The first field type recognized was baseball fields.

Two years ago this program moved completely online, although applicants are allowed to send their photos on a CD or flash drive to help simplify the process. An online application was desired to make certain that each applicant was judged solely on the information provided, and not the packaging in which it was sent. Some facilities with higher budgets would send in bound books and graphically designed applications. "Moving to an online process has added another element of impartiality to the process," says Andrew Gossel, Awards Committee Chairman. "The committee already independently scores and judges the applications; online strengthens objectivity," he says.

The application requires that a field have two full seasons of play before being submitted. Play can be concurrent. However, the judges desire to have the information in the application reflect the full year of management practices. According to Gossel, "The judges look for those fields that have a comprehensive management program. The field may have had some challenges to overcome throughout the year. We're not looking for the largest budgets, but how well utilized the budgets are in preparing the field for play." Photos of the field throughout the entire year are also required as is membership in STMA.

If a sports turf manager wishes to enter two fields; that is certainly acceptable, but two separate applications will need to be submitted. The

application requires that four Playing Conditions Indices be conducted. "Our PCI is a great way for the judges to understand how a field is playing at a certain point in time considering all of the factors affecting it," Gossel says. "It really is a useful tool for the sports turf manager and for the committee."

When asked what advice he would give to those who are submitting their field, Gossel cites three things: "Take your time with the application and really include thorough information about your field. Watch your grammar and spelling; an application with misspellings and poor grammar is not very professional. Finally, write a compelling reason why the committee should consider your field a winner," says Gossel.

The 2013 Field of the Year application is on line at www.STMA.org under the Professionalism tab. Applications are due October 15. Winners will be notified by November 8. Those who are selected will receive three nights' lodging at the upcoming Conference, a complimentary conference registration, signature clothing, and the award, which is presented during the annual banquet. The winner will also be featured in an upcoming issue of *SportsTurf* magazine and may be featured on the cover.

Minor League Baseball Sports Turf Managers of the Year

STMA in partnership with Minor League Baseball (MiLB) presents an award each year to the Minor League Baseball Sports Turf Manager in four classifications: Triple A, Double A, Single A and Short Season or Rookie.

The MiLB has a process to select its own sports turf manager league winner. They provide to STMA the 16 league winners; STMA provides the application and criteria to each of the league winners. They subsequently apply for this award. Some of the information they must submit includes photos, narratives on their game day routines, cultural practices, letters from their league president and general manager and their involvement in the industry. All materials are required to be submitted electronically.

The deadline for this program varies; it depends upon the timing when MiLB has all of their league winners identified. Winners are announced in October and are honored during the MiLB Awards luncheon during the Baseball Winter Meetings.

Innovative Awards Program

This program is seeks to recognize those commercial companies that are advancing the profession of sports turf management through innovation.

Any STMA Commercial member who is exhibiting at the upcoming STMA Annual Conference and Exhibition is eligible to submit one entry annually. The company must display the innovation in its booth and have introduced it for sale between the close of the current year's STMA show and the close of the following year's show.

The judging criteria focuses on if a product, service, equipment or technology enhances the effectiveness of the sports turf manager and/or makes the surface safer and more playable for athletes. When submitting for this award, Gossel advises that the definition of innovative be kept at the forefront. "From our judges' perspective, innovative really means that the submittal is cutting edge and has not been seen before. Slight improvements to existing products are good for the industry, but really don't qualify for this award," Gossel says.

Any commercial member on the committee recuses him/herself from judging this award and is not involved in this program in any way. The Committee may award multiple companies that meet the criteria.

All applications are submitted electronically, and are due by October 15. The application is online at www.STMA.org, under the Professionalism tab.

Winner(s) will be kept confidential until announced during the first day of the STMA Trade Show. A special innovative logo has been designed and winners will be able to use that logo in their promotion of the winning product, service, technology or equipment. STMA will publicize the winners through its communication vehicles, STMA press releases, signage at the conference, and with special recognition during the Annual Awards Banquet.

Judging these programs takes the Awards Committee more than 30 hours of volunteer time over a 2-3 week period. Members of the Committee include: Chairman Andrew Gossel, Alan Dungey, Ben Polimer, Charlie Vestal, Chris Ralston, Dean Rush, CSFM, George Trivett, CSFM, Grant Davisson, Joey Fitzgerald, Keith Gorczyca, Lance Tibbetts, CSFM, Matt Anderson, Michael Buras, CSFM, Patrick Coakley, CSFM, Sarah Martin, CSFM, and William McBride, Sr. If any of these members know a sports turf manager who has submitted for the Field of the Year or the MiLB Sports Turf Manager, they reveal that to the Committee and do not judge that particular submittal. Scoring totals are reflected on a percentage basis for this reason.

STMA receives generous support from Carolina Green, Ewing, Hunter and World Class Athletic Surfaces for these Awards Programs. This funding allows STMA to enhance the program each year.

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