dent irrigation professional.

Irrigation consultants should have a thorough understanding of various system components: backflow preventers, pump stations and controls, control valves, piping and fittings, sprinkler heads and irrigation control systems and how they operate as a system. As important as irrigation equipment selection is to the performance of a system, good selection alone won't ensure that an irrigation project and bonding, and active participation in professional organizations hint that a company takes its business seriously. But ask for references and follow up with phone calls. Successful track records are important in this business.

Luke Frank is a veteran writer on irrigation topics. He can be reached at lukefrank@earthlink.net.

succeeds. These system components must be properly installed and work in concert to address specific site demands.

It can't be over-emphasized that a large-scale irrigation installation involves much more than planting equipment into the ground. In addition to the above-mentioned considerations, a quality irrigation system installation should reflect the diversity and skill of various additional site specialists, including property owners and managers; plant suppliers; landscape architects or designers, managers and maintenance contractors; engineers; and irrigation designers and managers. This group of specialized professionals must work in step to create a sustainable, aesthetic visual presentation within a reasonable budget and timeline.

The scope of such a project requires detailed knowledge of each professional's role, as well as general project oversight and coordination thus the recommendation to explore the services of an independent irrigation consultant. The larger the project, the greater the opportunity for irrigation efficiency and performance and the greater the margin of error that can result in expensive water waste, hardscape and plant replacement, and fiscal accountability for a poorly performing system.

Remember too, that the more involved an installation contractor or irrigation consultant is at the project's planning stage, the greater the opportunity for success. Pre-construction meetings are a great place to garner an increased understanding of the overall project and the people involved. At that point, the installation contractor can have walked the site and taken field measurements, so any design and installation concerns can be addressed prior to construction.

In addition to the actual installation, contractors and consultants have a critical role in filing the appropriate construction documents at the appropriate time. Although it seems rudimentary, "misfiling" legal paperwork can instantly shut down a project.

After developing a reasonable level of confidence in prospective contractors or consultants, how do you make your final selection? References. Certification, insurance



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Enhance your career during show season

BY MIKE ANDRESEN, CSFM

s the state, regional, and national trade conference season picks up steam this month it is important for us to realize they offer a great opportunity to progress our professionalism and skills. Conferences are a perfect time to renew old friendships and introduce yourself to

new industry friends. Networking is very important and very rewarding. Of all the "green" industries, ours may maximize the networking as well or better than any other.

Whether your budget allows you to attend one or many trade show conferences, there are things you can do to not only justify your attendance to administration but to also help you maximize the opportunity. I contend that we too often fail to come prepared to receive the maximum benefit from our conference and exposition experience and we too often fail to report back to our administration the importance of our attendance. Writing up a small summary of how each conference will benefit your operation is vital in securing the next opportunity and positively reflects on you as a professional, ultimately making you a more valuable employee.

In the weeks before attending a conference I look at the schedule of speakers and topics closely to determine my "must see" sessions. I keep in mind the short-term issues of field and facility management that I'm directly responsible for and highlight those talks that will address immediate concerns. Each of us also has an idea of our administration's long range goals and plans. Sessions that may help me become a more valuable asset when planning for the future are also circled as "must see."

I have a responsibility to upgrade my value to my employer when presented that opportunity and conferences offer this chance. Come to these sessions with an idea of how they can benefit you and have an idea of key questions or issues you'd like expert guidance on. Being prepared to soak in the presentation, actively pull expertise from it, and adapting it to your real world future helps us be engaged into the presentation and collectively allows the presenter to connect with the audience and put his or her best effort on display.

Trade shows and expositions are something that we certainly overlook and underuse! In this era of electronic shopping and information gathering it is easy for attendees to forego this important opportunity. Commercial representatives are experts on their products and services. An initial discovery from an online search can help you develop questions about a product but talking face-to-face with a company representative will give you the chance to touch, sit on, or feel a piece of equipment that interests you. Many times I've come to a trade show booth with an entirely incorrect perception of the "how and why" of a product or service. Oftentimes we don't have an immediate need for the represented product or service but can predict a future need at our facility. When the time comes to act on the future purchase or contract you will already have a basic understanding of the need or issues and hopefully you will have developed a relationship with a trusted industry professional that can help guide you through the upcoming process.

We also have an obligation to our employer to take full advantage of new technology, new services, and cutting edge ways of thinking about our jobs. Vendors are one of our greatest resources. They travel the region and the country, sometimes the world, observing successful and unsuccessful operations. Their success depends on our success as sports turf and facility managers.

I know that too many of us see commercial representatives and sales professionals



as adversaries. The fact is because of their travels, expertise, and experience we can learn a great deal about being a better turfgrass professional from them. Vendors, as well, have a great opportunity at trade shows to help add to the conference education experience and develop longtime and valuable relationships. Seldom has a trade show "hard sell" been rewarded with a written up sales ticket from me!

My interest in the trade show is to experience the existing and cutting edge technology available to me as a sports turf manager, and to maximize the chance to develop solid professional relationships with those with the same interests. The relationship between commercial representatives and sports turf management professionals is symbiotic. Each vendor feels their product can be beneficial in our quest to produce safe and aesthetically pleasing playing fields and facilities. Without properly examining each of the products and services we cannot be sure we are doing all we can to ensure the same. Just as we incur a financial expense to attend conferences and upgrade our expertise, commercial representatives also incur costs in support of that same upgrade in our expertise. Supporting those that support us by purchasing their goods and services ensures that our entire profession remains healthy and full of committed professionals.

I encourage you to evaluate your next conference packet and realize that there are potential teammates within both the academic and the exposition sides of the profession. My administrators feel the time and expense to attend conferences is worthwhile in my professional development as well as the development of our program. It's important that I acknowledge that importance by way of a short summary of its significance upon my return from each conference. We do need all the teammates we can gather throughout our journey of sports turf management and I encourage each of us to prepare for this conference and exposition season to maximize our opportunities to grow and become the best professional we can be. To our friends on both sides of the table I wish you a productive and safe conference season.

Mike Andresen, CSFM, is Athletic Turf Manager, Iowa State University, Secretary of the STMA Board, and a member of our Editorial Advisory Board. He can be reached at mandrese@iastate.edu.

Olympic baseball field "made in USA"

he world's eyes were on Greece for the 2004 Summer Games, where the best athletes came to prove themselves worthy of gold. Sports Turf Managers Association past president Murray Cook led The Brickman Group's design and management services on the Helleniko Baseball Centre in Athens. "These were the best playing

surfaces the sport has had since becoming an Olympic sport," said Aldo Notari, president of the International Baseball Federation.

Brickman's Sports'Turf services has seen its share of "Olympic Gold," having worked in a similar capacity on the stadiums for the 2000 games in Sydney, Australia and the 2002 Baseball World Cup in Taiwan, while looking ahead to the 2008 games in Beijing, China.

"Aside from the rough terrain, one of the major challenges with the Athens project was working with a crew of native talent who had never seen a baseball game," said Cook. A Deputy Competition Manager with the Athens Olympic Committee, Cook was probably the best authority to teach the crews what they needed to know to build and maintain the fields. "We had to explain to volunteers



many things we take for granted: what is a drag, what is a rake, what is a tamp, and what is a base, even."

Converting the site was the other challenge. It was no small feat to take an abandoned World War II airfield and turn it into a world class playing surface. "This field had seen two World Wars," says Cook. "When we began excavating, we discovered ordnance deep under the runways. Every time we turned over another piece of tar-

mac we'd have to call in the army to check everything out."

Cook says they unearthed six bombs, both German and British, in the first phase of construction.

Once the Games opened, Cook's job was far from over. He and his team were on site to supervise the competition schedule and ensure the field and maintenance operations ran smoothly.

"In all my 20+ years of playing international sports, I would rank this facility and playing surface at the top of the list," said Dusty Rhodes, manager of the Greek National team. **ST**

The Brickman Group, Ltd., supplied this story and photos. For more information visit www.brickmangroup.com.

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Field construction company directory

Here is a listing of companies known to construct or renovate athletic fields:

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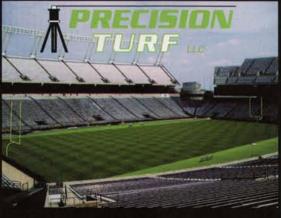
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Diamond Athletic Turf, Inc. Stow, MA 978-897-0344

Duraturf Service Corp. Richmond, VA 800-358-8283



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Glenn Rehbein Co. Blaine, MN 763-784-0657

Grant Sports Fields Columbus, GA 706-596-9236 www.grantsportsfields.com

GreenTech, Inc. Roswell, Georgia 770-587-2522 www.greentechitm.com

Greenway Services Horsham, PA 215-343-0110

Gregori International Miami, FL 305-663-7393 www.gregori.com

D.A. Hogan & Associates Seattle, WA 206-285-0400

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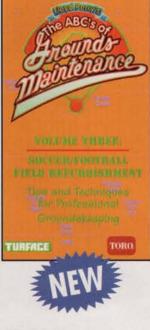
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The Motz Group, Inc. Cincinnati, OH 513-533-6452 www.themotzgroup.com

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OneSource Landscape & Golf Services Tampa, FL 813-886-0001 www.onesourcelandscapeandgolf.com

Precision Turf Buford, GA 770-965-6220 jonathan@pturf.net



RTM Sport, Inc. Burtonsville MD 301-421-0070

Realty Landscaping Corp. Phoenixville, PA 610-631-2523 www.realtylandscaping.com

REIL Construction, Inc. Union, IL 815-923-4321

Rettler Corp. Stevens Point, WI 715-341-2633

Shearon Sports Plymouth Meeting, PA (610) 828-5488 www.shearonsports.com

SPORTEXE Construction Services Round Rock, TX 512-246-7100 www.sportexe.com

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Sweetwater Construction Alexander City, AL 205-822-7353 swtwat@bellsouth.net



Team All Sports Cincinnati OH 513-241-6210 TeamAllSports@aol.com

Nolan Thomas & Co. Stovall NC 919-693-6478

Turbo Link International Clearwater, FL 727-442-2570 www.tlisports.com

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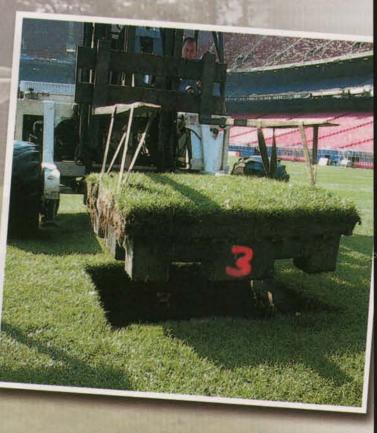
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