

STMA in action

San José lauded as exceptional venue, top quality education

THE SPORTS TURF MANAGERS ASSOCIATION held its 20th annual Conference in San José January 13-17, and attendees and commercial partners praised the event and the educational program. Member Mark Holder, Roswell, GA, said, "This was only my second conference and being new in the turf side of things, the education and networking are beyond compare. I have been to numerous other conferences and none of them touch STMA."

There were more than 90 hours of education presented, which focused on technical information and introduced new techniques and practices to sports facility managers. Although conference registration numbers were tracking slightly less than the 2008 conference, total attendance was more than 1,400, and exhibitors felt it was time well spent. Doug Schattinger, president of Pioneer Athletics said, "We felt we had a very good show and presence in San Jose. The amount and caliber (foot traffic) was more than sufficient for our expectations."

The conference presented three off-site seminars. Participants toured notable sports venues such as Candlestick Park, AT&T Park, and Giants Municipal Stadium, and collegiate sports facilities at Stanford, Santa Clara and San José State universities. In addition, attendees stopped at the San Francisco 49ers' training facility and a large youth soccer park. During the third off-site seminar, sports turf managers from the NFL, MLB and MLS conducted hands-on training and demonstration.

Leadership guru Steve Farber addressed the opening general session with a message that everyone can lead for success at their facility, regardless of

position, title or level. A second keynote was presented by Dr. Ali Harivandi, University of California Cooperative Extension, who offered water management strategies for the sports turf industry.

STMA offered three technical institutes directed to basic, advanced and highly advanced audiences. STMA's Foundation, SAFE, conducted a golf tournament in advance of the conference, and STMA debuted a Career Center that offered short workshops, a job board, and résumé writing and interviewing tips. New this year was a focus on health, and a skin cancer screening booth was introduced. There was also an educational session presented on the trade show floor that demonstrated sports field painting techniques. Sports turf managers painted the STMA logo on natural grass and synthetic turf, which were laid out side-by-side in the exhibit hall.

At the annual lunch and meeting, STMA presented its 2009 Board of Directors to the membership, and presented awards to its scholarship, Field of the Year, and Founders Awards winners at the closing Annual Awards banquet.

The conference and golf tournament sponsors include Barenbrug USA, Beacon Athletics, Covermaster, Inc., Cygnet Turf Equipment, Diamond Pro/TXI, Ewing Irrigation, Field of Greens, Hunter Industries, Jacobsen, A Textron Co., Kubota Tractor Corp., Landscapes Unlimited, Midwest Rake Co., Newsom Seed, Inc., OC Jones & Sons, Profile Products, LLC/Turface, Pro's Choice/Oil-Dri. Corp., Rain Bird Corp., The Toro Company, West Coast Turf, and World Class Athletic Surfaces, Inc. ■

Add new Infield Maintenance DVD to your collection

Do you find it difficult to get your infield ready for a game? Not sure how to fix that lip at the third base cutout? Unsure of the correct sand/clay mixture for your infield mix? STMA, its charitable foundation SAFE, and the National Interscholastic Association of Athletic Administrators (NIAAA) have again teamed up to bring you a valuable educational tool for your library. *Maintaining a Baseball or Softball Skinned Infield* focuses on the basics of infield maintenance and answering the questions above and more.

STMA Board Members Larry DiVito, Head Groundskeeper, Washington Nationals and Jody Gill, Grounds Coordinator, Blue Valley School District, lead you around the infield, dealing with lips, lines, water and much more. Larry provides some amazing insight and information used at the professional level, while Jody asks the right questions and helps the schools and parks and recreation sports turf manager get the most bang for their buck.

STMA will be offering the new Infield Maintenance DVD by itself for \$15 (plus S&H), or as part of a new DVD Combo Pack with the *Mound Building* and *Home Plate Maintenance* DVD for \$25 (plus S&H). Pick up these valuable resources today by filing out the form on page 42 or call Patrick Allen at 800-323-3875. ■

DVD image courtesy of istockphoto.com.

Be a Presenter in Disney

STMA's 2010 annual conference will be held January 12-16 at the Disney Coronado Springs Hotel and Convention Center in Orlando. Plan now to take an essential role in the conference—that of a presenter. Go on line to www.STMA.org and click on the link to complete the "Call for Presentations." The form is easy to fill out and leads you through the process with suggestions for topics and presentation lengths. The form will require an outline of your presentation as part of the submittal. All submissions are due electronically to STMA by March 15. Please call headquarters at 1-800-323-3875, if you have any questions about presenting, or problems with the electronic form. ■



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Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association: www.cstma.org.

Florida #1 Chapter: 954/782-2748

Gateway Chapter Sports Turf Managers Association: www.gatewaystma.org.

Georgia Sports Turf Managers Association: www.gstma.org.

The Greater L.A. Basin Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association: www.stmalabasin.com.

Illinois Chapter STMA: 847/263-7603.

Intermountain Chapter of the Sports Turf Managers Association: www.imstma.org.

Iowa Sports Turf Managers Association: www.iowaturfgrass.org.

Keystone Athletic Field Managers Org. (KAFMO/STMA): www.kafmo.org.

Kentucky Sports Turf Managers Association: www.kystma.org.

Michigan Sports Turf Managers Association (MiSTMA): www.mistma.org.

Minnesota Chapter STMA: www.mstma.com.

MO-KAN Sports Turf Managers Association: www.mokanstma.com.

New England STMA (NESTMA): www.nestma.org.

Nebraska Sports Turf Managers Association: 402/441-4425.

North Carolina Chapter of STMA: www.ncsportsturf.org.

North Florida STMA Chapter: 850/580-4026.

Northern California STMA: www.norcalstma.org.

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Sports Turf Managers of New York: www.stmony.org.

Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey: www.sfmanj.org.

Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association (OSTMA): www.ostma.org.

Pacific Northwest Sports Turf Managers Association: www.pnwstma.org.

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Texas Sports Turf Managers Association: 866/897-8621.

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Cut Here #

Mow this way and that way

No, this is not a talk on striping fields. Last month at the STMA Conference in San Jose several different mowing strategies surfaced for cool-season turf. Some said to mow taller, some said shorter, some said to use growth inhibitors to reduce mowing and others said to fertilize more to grow grass faster and make more biomass. Some said to raise the mowing height during the summer while others said to leave it at the same mowing height all the time. It can be confusing. What is the best mowing strategy?

Mowing is one of the most routine management practices applied to grass. Some of the general mowing principles are listed below in bold type. Let's take some of the mowing principles that we all agree upon and then fit them into mowing strategies that produce the desired outcome you need for your specific athletic field situation.

Mow taller

A taller mowing height has deeper roots that can extract water from a larger volume of soil. **This translates into better fields during dry conditions.** Athletic fields that are mowed at a 2-inch playing height are often raised to 3 inches or greater in the summer to reduce stress. This is a true statement and it is best used as a strategy to help non-irrigated playing fields survive summer heat and drought. **Raising the mowing height** does reduce summer stress but it **also reduces turf density** or the number of shoots per square inch. If irrigation is not limiting and your goal is to maximize turf cover and density, then raising the mowing height may not be a good strategy for your situation. In fact, raising the mowing height during the summer to 3 inches reduces shoot density and then lowering the mowing height to 2 inches just before starting the September football season will result in play on "stemmy" turf with low density.

Mow shorter

Mowing shorter increases turf density and increases shallow rooting. Shallow rooting reduces drought avoidance so this may not be a good idea where irrigation is limited or not available. Shorter mowed turf wears out faster because there is less foliage, but it has better divot resistance because of the increased densi-

ty and abundance of shallow roots near the surface that contributes to beneficial biomass in the cleating zone of the field. A lower mowing height strategy works best to maximize turf density and divot resistance when there is adequate irrigation and 100% turf cover.

The current mowing strategy for many sport field managers is to "set it and forget it." Select the game ready mowing height and don't change. College and professional football fields are often mowed at 1.25 to 1.5 inches all the time. This allows for a consistent density throughout the playing and non-playing season. A slight variation on this would be to train the grass at a slightly lower mowing height throughout the spring and summer to maximize shoot density, and then slightly raise the mowing height to game ready conditions just before the season starts to improve wear tolerance.

Sport-specific mowing heights

Baseball. Professional and college baseball infields are often mowed at 0.5 to 1.0 inches throughout the playing season as long as the surface is smooth. High school infields can range from below an inch to 2.5 inches depending on the bumpiness of the field and the coaches' desires. With a few years of coring, top-dressing, and level dragging bumpy high school fields can be smoothed and lowered to a 1.0 inch mowing height. There are also several rotary, walk-behind striping mowers with rear rollers that produce a smoother cut and mowing heights between 0.5 and 2.0 inches. They are durable, simple to use, and perfect for high school baseball infields.

Football and soccer. Football fields can range from 1.25 to 3.5 inches depending on the coaches' perception of what a good field is for their players. Soccer is generally played on fields that are mowed between 0.75 and 1.75 inches. Shorter mowing heights and light irrigation to make the leaves wet creates a faster playing surface that is often desired by better soccer teams.

Your mowing strategy may target turf density, stress resistance, divot resistance, and wear tolerance, but don't forget that your goal is to provide a level of playability that maximizes player performance and is suitable for the coach's game strategy. Hopefully there won't be more than a half inch between you. ■

Q&A




BY DR. DAVID MINNER

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Questions?

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