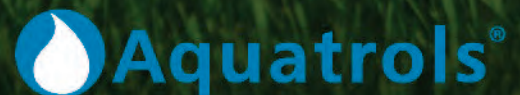


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On the cover: Infinity Park is a city-owned facility that regularly hosts events of different stripes though it may best be known as a rugby pitch. Noel Harryman leads a veteran crew in battling the elements in Colorado.



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From the Sidelines



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How to interview job applicants

IN A FEW PAGES we have an article on the job prospects of recent turfgrass program graduates and one about strategies for success and significance in your work life. Here we share some thoughts from the other side of the table, courtesy of Patrick McGuiness, who presented at this year's STMA Conference on "Hiring the Right Person." McGuiness is a consultant, speaker, author, and attorney as well as a First Lieutenant and Judge Advocate in the US Army Reserve.

"The interview process is one of the most important tools you have when hiring. How many times have you had a candidate that looked incredible on paper turn out to be a dud during the interview process? Here are some questions you can ask to point you to the right candidates for the positions you are trying to fill."

1. Have a level playing field.

It would be unfair to give one candidate a bunch more time than another to explain the qualifications. So, set a time limit for each interview and stick closely to it. However, don't put a stopwatch on the table that just makes things unnecessarily awkward. Create a comfortable interview environment for all the candidates. You want people to be at ease at first when they are being interviewed so that they feel comfortable opening up to you when they answer questions.

2. Prepare ahead of time.

Have specific questions planned for each interview ahead of time. If you are using a panel to interview candidates, assign each question to a specific person so that the interview flows smoothly. Often interview questions end up a lot like bad job postings. The questions are too easy to anticipate, such as "Tell me about a time you faced a challenge, and how you overcame it." Whenever you have questions that are anticipated by the candidate, you are going to get 'canned' responses that do not give you much insight into what the candidate is really like.

3. Ask good questions.

Ask questions that will give you clues about the candidate's ability to perform well at the job you are hiring for. Don't ask leading questions; instead try to keep questions neutral so that you can find out how the candidate honestly feels, not how they think you want them to feel. For example, if you ask "Would you be able to start at 7am every day and work weekends sometimes?" of course the candidate is going to say yes. Instead, try asking "What would your ideal work schedule look like?" While the answer they give may not match your hours exactly, you will get insight into the candidate's work ethic, and whether they researched your organization.

4. Pause and pay attention.

While you are working within a timeframe, don't jump to the next question whenever there is a lull in the candidate's response. Take a second and pause before starting the next question. Often this pause will spur the candidate to keep talking and expand on what they have already said. This will give you further insight into the candidate's level of preparedness. Make it a habit to add this silent pause before asking more questions. You will be surprised how candidate's fill the space you create. ■

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Surprise, surprise, surprise

I CHANNEL THE WORDS OF GOMER PYLE into this month's message title, proving that you never know when one's familiarity with "The Andy Griffith Show" can pay dividends (and you will see that eventually it works with what I have to say).

As hectic and crazy as my travel has been this spring, I participated in a recent educational program that gave me a nice boost in morale. My latest positive reinforcement came in early April at Virginia State University, Virginia Tech's sister land-grant university, and the United States' first fully state-supported, 4-year institution of higher learning for black Americans. The VSU Dean of Agriculture, Dr. Jewel Hairston, asked me to help develop a Turfgrass Management Workshop for about 150 students. I asked some of my state's top turfgrass professionals to join me in the workshop. These men were every bit as good as I expected in detailing their careers in golf turf, lawn care, sod production and sports turf. Before my day was completed, it was the presentation on sports turf that generated the largest number of questions for me.

Jimmy Rodgers, CSFM, gave that presentation, talking about his experiences with George Mason University, the University of Virginia, and the Washington Nationals. These young men and women got a nice taste of what is involved in sports turf management at the highest levels. The students were pleasantly surprised (and excited) to learn that Jimmy was an English major by academic training. He let them know that if they had a strong work ethic and a desire to learn that internships in sports turf management at all levels were available.

My colleagues and I agreed that these were collectively some of the best spoken, best dressed college students we have engaged in a long time. I asked some what their goals were, got some great answers, and a few even said their goals might have changed because of the workshop. One young man stayed late to talk one-on-one with me, and it was evident he had a great personality. Before I knew it we were talking about March Madness, Wrestlemania, and even music. He listens to Drake, I like The Infamous Stringdusters, and we decided we didn't have any more to talk about in that category!

Then he turned my "What are your goals?" question back on me. I had to think for a bit. Finally, I said I wanted to come back to VSU in 5 years to do the program again. And this time, instead of having four white men talking about their careers, I would like to see a young man or woman from VSU joining me. He looked me in the eye and said, "Don't be surprised if that happens."

My day at a school that does not even have a turfgrass management program opened my eyes to a large pool of talented and motivated young men and women who might make outstanding sports turf managers one day soon. Are there any potential "surprises" out there waiting to be uncovered by you? ■



2013 job market for turf program graduates

Editor's note: We asked those in charge of undergraduate turfgrass management programs at universities across the country for reports on whether their students had secured jobs in the industry. Here are the responses we received:

DELAWARE VALLEY COLLEGE (PA)

Dr. Doug Linde reports: "The only senior that I have that is interested in sports fields is graduating in December 2013 because he took a full semester off to intern with the Philadelphia Eagles (something that is not too common but a great idea if it doesn't lead to any serious issues with finishing the degree in a reasonable time). All of these students have worked on multiple golf courses over three or four summers, which is the main reason they had no trouble landing a full time job after graduation. In fact, I had to advise a few of these students to work less so that they could take full advantage of their opportunity to get a degree.

"Since Del Val is located so close to many golf courses, it's common for students to hold a part-time job during the semester. I usually recommend they not work during the semester since they essentially have a full-time job in

going to college. Many have also worked or volunteered at pro tournaments.

"Here are the May 2013 Del Val College turf management bachelor of science degree graduates, 100% of whom had jobs secured by January 2013 for starting work in May; (Kelly, Ridington, and Taylor are on our NCAA D III golf team that I coach. In fact, this year eight of the 10 players on the team are also my advisees since they are studying turf management.):"

- James Bryson, assistant-in-training, Merion GC
- Kevin Keezer, assistant supt., Bear Trap Dunes GC, MD
- Tim Kelly, assistant supt., Manasquan CC, NJ
- Jesse Ridington, graduate intern, Saucon Valley CC
- Kevin Taylor, graduate intern, Oak Hill CC, NY

◀ **PARTICIPANTS** take the STMA's Student Challenge during Conference. Anecdotal evidence shows most 2013 graduates are finding jobs in the turf industry.

OKLAHOMA STATE

Dr. Greg Bell reports: "We only have one student graduating this spring and I believe that he already has a position waiting for him. In the 15 years that I have been the turfgrass teaching professor here at Oklahoma State we have graduated 132 turf management students and all of those students who were actively pursuing a turfgrass position during their last semester have had a position or an offer of a position waiting for them when they graduated.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Dr. Bruce Clarke reported that Yuanshuo (Henry) Qu, a turf undergraduate student within the Department of Plant Biology and Pathology, received the "Plant Science Excellence Award" for 2013. This award is given to the undergraduate student in Plant Science with the highest GPA. Henry's GPA is 3.8.

Five Rutgers students will graduate in May or next fall. Erik Taylor, Jay Ewan starting an assistants position at Merion golf club in Philly after graduation), Tyler Astor, Henry Qu will be working the summer at Plainfield CC in NJ as an intern), and Kevin Rundstrom working at Hidden Creek golf club, near Atlantic City, as an assistant.

KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE (IA)

Troy McQuillen, turf instructor, reports: "Here are some statistics from my graduating class. I currently have 45 full-time students enrolled in the 2-year Golf Course and Athletic Turfgrass Management Program. These students will complete a total of 68 credit hours earning them an A.A.S degree (Associates of Applied Science)."

These students will be returning back for a 2nd year: Eight 1st year students pursuing both golf and sports turf local internships; 12 1st year students pursuing both golf and sports turf out-of-state internships; and four 1st year students taking full-time summer classes and will pursue an internship later.

Of the students receiving degrees, nine

have secured full-time employment; three are transferring to 4-year institutions; and six will be working seasonally or taking a second internship to gain experience.

And then there are 3-4 students who are still confused about what they want to do with their lives.

“When I meet with students about their careers there are so many factors that influence their future after graduation. Many of the students attend our college because most of them like to stay local. There are limited full-time job opportunities in Iowa and even more limited when students stay in Eastern Iowa. The good news is that graduated students that want to stay in our area are willing to be patient for the full-time jobs to open.

“Our students have had a lot of success with out-of-state job opportunities. Most of them develop a relationship during their internship and then are welcomed back for a 2nd internship or full-time employment.

“Students that are employed full-time are taking assistant, 2nd assistant or assistant in training positions. Most students feel pre-

pared for the job, but would like additional assistant level training before jumping into a head position.”

MT. SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE (CA)

Brian Scott, professor of horticulture, reports on his students' accomplishments, 2012-13:

Fleur Nooyen:

- Street Tree Seminar, Inc. Scholarship Award recipient, December 2012.
- MSAC Faculty Association Career Technical Education Scholarship recipient, Mt. San Antonio College, June 2012.
- Don Angelbeck Scholarship Award, Agricultural Sciences Department, Mt. San Antonio College, June 2012.
- 2012 Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, Agricultural Sciences Department, Mt. San Antonio College, June 2012.
- Sports Turf Managers Association Student Challenge bronze medal winner, Long Beach, January 2012.

Fleur has had many of her landscape design and installation projects receive awards

and honors by a number of prestigious organizations.

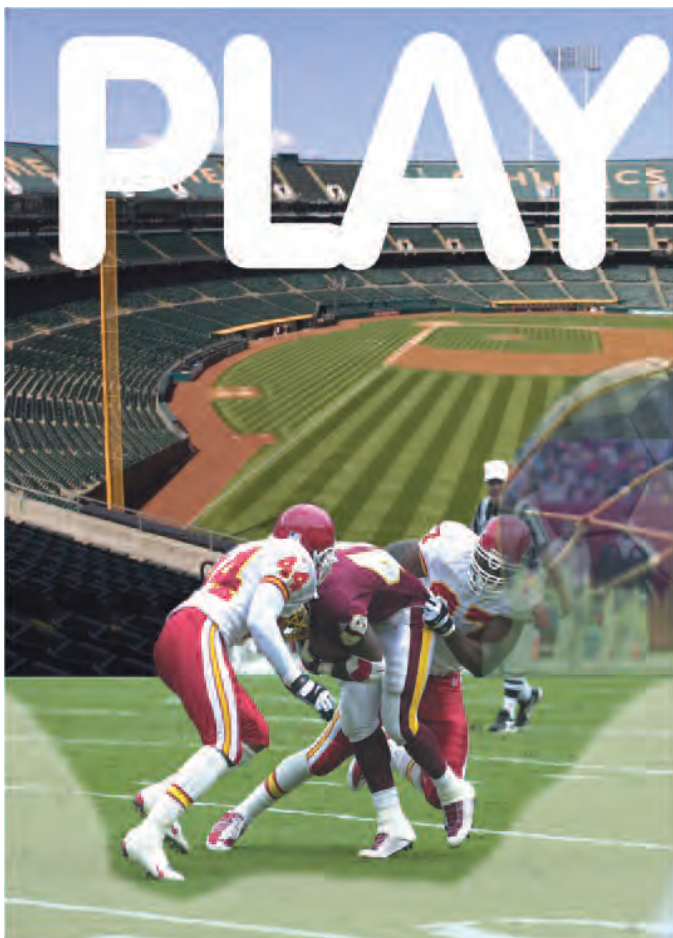
Kevin Marsh was recently named an assistant superintendent at Arrowhead Country Club in San Bernardino, CA. He has shown an extremely high aptitude for turfgrass management. He is also one of those young men who are always willing to help out whenever there is a need. His future will be extremely bright in the golf industry, until he wises up and has even a brighter career in sports turf!

Kay Hoevel:

- Was recognized by the Mt. SAC Ag Sciences Department as the 2012 Outstanding Student in Irrigation and Landscape Construction
- Received Certificates of Achievement in Sports Turf Management and Landscape and Park Management.
- Was hired as a consultant for a local Lawn Bowling association

Kay's world was literally revolutionized by becoming a member of the Mt. SAC Turf Team over the past 2 years. She has seen a part

Continued on page 20



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BOOSTING YOUR CAREER:

strategies for success and significance in your work life

ACCORDING TO DR. TOM DENHAM, one of the pioneers on career stages, those in the workforce will usually move through five career stages, somewhat framed by age:

Growth - ages four to 13, when individuals first become aware of the future;

Exploration - ages mid-teens to mid-twenties, when various occupational options are explored though school, leisure, part-time work and volunteering;

Establishment - ages mid-twenties to mid-forties, typically a suitable field is selected and efforts are made to secure a long-term place in the chosen career;

Maintenance - ages mid-forties to mid-sixties, characterized by constancy, either by “holding on,” which is stagnating or plateauing, or by “keeping up,” which is updating or enriching; and

Disengagement - mid-sixties, typically marked by moving from formal employment to finding new roles with a view to retirement. However, Baby Boomers are changing this to a stage more appropriately named “Re-invent-ment.” They are completely redesigning the idea of “retirement,” preferring to work in some form while pursuing new or renewed outside interests.

What is critical to successful employment at any stage is career development, i.e., constantly improving yourself to add value in the workplace.

WHAT IS EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS?

During a gathering of sports turf managers at a women’s forum held in conjunction with the Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference, the concept of employment success was discussed. Interestingly, the items high on the list were not about monetary compensation. Job satisfaction, making a difference and respect for the job that sports turf managers do were at the top. Also discussed were the ways to achieve success. These included having a passion for the work, doing a great job, and continually improving

oneself. Also making the list were communicating well, projecting confidence in your leadership abilities, and asking for help.

At this year’s Golf Industry Show, golf course superintendents shared some strategies that helped them to achieve career success; many are similar to and build on those discussed at the women’s forum. These strategies have been redirected to sports field management, but can be applied to virtually any industry because they focus on self development.

TOP 10 TIPS TO CAREER SUCCESS

1) Volunteer. Become involved in your local chapter, community and national association. Taking on leadership roles in these organizations gives you visibility and positions you as someone who can be counted on to follow through. Volunteering adds another dimension to your work experience and can provide professional recognition, a clearer view of the industry, networking contacts, and speaking experience.

2) Continue with your Education. Be proactive in continuing your education and promote it. You must stay current in a broad range of disciplines including agronomics, business management, communication, financial management, environmental regulations, etc. View non-technical continuing education as equally important to the technical areas of your job. Make certain that your employer knows that you value professional development. Learning and knowing how to learn is the most important skill needed by employers according to a study conducted jointly by the US Department of Labor and the American Society for Training and Development.

3) Over-communicate. Continually communicate with your employer, your staff, facility management team, users of your fields, and fans. Communicating helps to build trust and confidence. Clear and continuous communication ensures that expectations are verbalized, progress is discussed, and challenges are addressed.

4) Ask Questions. Asking questions lets your employer know that you are interested in learning “why.” The more you know, the more you can add value and be valued.

5) Develop good relationships within your own organization. Being known as a responsive leader outside of your department adds to your credibility and possible mobility to the next step up your career ladder. Employers who have smart, solution-oriented employees are more apt to pro-

mote from within rather than hiring new talent.

6) Put yourself in the role. Determine what you want to do, where you want to be, and become that person. If you are in an assistant’s role, ask to take on new projects and challenges that are typically the responsibility of the head position, so that you acquire skills beyond what is needed for your current position.

7) It’s who you know. Vendors, architects, builders, coaches, colleagues...this is the network that can help to alert you to new job opportunities. Be sure to cultivate these relationships. One-half or more of all jobs come through informal channels—connections to friends, families, and colleagues—according to “Limited Network Connections and the Distribution of Wages,” by Kenneth J. Arrow of Stanford University and Ron Borzekowski of the Federal Reserve Board. Networking is the only way to tap into “unpublished” jobs. When it is time to move from an assistant to a head position, your supervisor can be your greatest advocate. Although your employer is sorry to lose you, he/she takes great pride in helping you move to your next career stage. After all, your employer invested in you.

8) Your facility is your résumé. The work that you do in preparing your fields for play is visible to athletes, coaches, fans and potential employers. When ready to move to another position consider creating a pictorial résumé that showcases the projects that you have accomplished with links to your own web page where you have posted career highlights.

9) Remember who is hiring you. As you move up to a head position or change employers, remember that the person hiring you is most likely someone who is not intimately familiar with your job. Write your résumé to focus on solutions and achievements, and be prepared in your interview to talk comfortably about what you do.

10) Be a professional in everything that you do and say. Your image is constantly being changed, reshaped and reformed based on many things including the way you communicate, dress, manage your staff and do your job. Being aware of how you are perceived by others can help you shape their perceptions of you. Be sure to maintain high ethical standards. It takes just the hint of impropriety to derail a career that you have spent years building. ■

This article was supplied by the headquarters staff of the Sports Turf Managers Association, Lawrence, KS, www.stma.org.