What would April be like if it were not for SF MANJ’s annual Spring Field Day? We won’t know this year, as a day has been planned similar to last year’s format in which education at two facilities is incorporated into one day.

Sports Field Managers Association of NJ is inviting everyone to attend its Spring Field Day on Thursday, April 13, 2006. The day will begin with a 7:30 registration at the front lobby of Shore Regional High School, West Long Branch, NJ. Coffee and donuts are sponsored by Northern Nurseries and Storr Tractor.

As part of indoor morning education, Marco Oliveira, Facilities Manager, ARAMARK Corporation, will describe his role in maintaining the sports fields at Shore Regional. The session will continue with a panel discussion on synthetic fields as well as pesticide education.

The program will move outside where Scott Bills, Northern Nurseries, will show proper techniques to construct a pitcher’s mound and home plate areas. This is a hands-on demonstration of synthetic fields as well as pesticide education.

The day will then move down the street to what has been called, “The Shore’s Greatest Stretch” – Monmouth Park Racetrack, Oceanport, NJ.

Lunch will be provided at Monmouth Park, sponsored by Storr Tractor Co. and Northern Nurseries.

In anticipation for the 2007 Breeders Cup, Monmouth Park embarked on a goal to fully reconstruct its turf course which had been plagued by poor drainage, inconsistent turfgrass cover, and poor traffic tolerance. Situated inside a dirt oval (editor’s note: “dirt”, as opposed to “soil”, is a perfectly acceptable term in reference to thoroughbred tracks...), the Monmouth Park turf course is a 7/8th mile natural turfgrass racing surface which annually hosts in excess of 100 races from late May through September each year.

A team of agronomists, engineers, irrigation specialists, and world-renowned turf track specialist was assembled by Rutgers University to provide design parameters, consulting, and construction supervision of the project. In its final stages of completion, the project entailed removal of the topsoil, installation of drainage, importation of subgrade material, replacement of the topsoil, installation of a new irrigation system, and sod installation. Additionally, a second interior racing chute was constructed and existing turf course banking was increased to facilitate better surface drainage.

Afternoon education at Monmouth Park will be provided by Dr. James Murphy, Rutgers University and the Monmouth Park staff.

For more information contact SF MANJ at 908-730-7770.

You do not want to miss this opportunity to gain practical sports field education and get a behind-the-scenes tour of the turf at one of the Northeast’s premier thoroughbred racing facilities!

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The 17th annual STMA Conference and Exhibition was held this year at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort and Conference Center. A record crowd of 1016 attendees celebrated STMA's 25th Anniversary with 38 educational sessions, hands-on workshops, tours of sports venues, the SAFE scholarship golf tournament, and a vast trade show. This was the second national conference that I have attended and it exceeded my expectations. The facility was first rate and the knowledge gained from the educational sessions and my peers was priceless. Where else can you have access to that many experts in one field?

As the grounds supervisor for the Pine Hill Public Schools I deal with a large number of school specific issues, so I kicked off my conference with a sports turf networking session for K-12 schools. SFMANJ vice-president Don Savard, CSFM gave a good talk about his experience with outsourcing and we had a chance to discuss topics we all have to deal with as sports turf managers. It was great to talk to people from all over the country that are going through the same things that you are. One of the topics discussed was providing professionally maintained fields on a school's budget. The common denominator seemed to be that expectations were higher than manpower and budget restraints would allow. I know we can change this. Through hard work, networking, and education of our administrators we can put forward a professional product and not break the bank.

One of the great things about the conference is the amount of choices you have in the educational sessions. I had a very difficult time deciding which ones to pick. Looking back I tried to cover a lot of bases. IPM is a hot button topic in our state right now, so I checked out Implementing IPM Strategies for Athletic Fields. Roch Gaussoin from the University of Nebraska was the speaker. He touched on most of the things that we are doing here in the Garden State such as proper seed selection, appropriate nitrogen usage, compaction relief, and proper use of pesticides. He was surprised by how strict our notification laws are (a topic for another time.) IPM is here to stay. We as sports turf managers are going to have to learn how to make it part of our program.

Infield maintenance is one of my favorite topics. I enjoy picking the brains of people who do it on the professional level. A panel discussion about infield mixes with Luke Yoder of the San Diego Padres, and Craig Potts from Texas A&M University was good stuff. They talked about the importance of water management in your infield and how mixes are different from one part of the country to the other. The other topic they both touched on was infield conditioner. The use of conditioner on our infields has made them much safer and gives the fielder a true bounce every time. If you are spending money on infield mix every year, you could get a lot more for your money if you topped off your infield with conditioner.

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