

Scott Bills

Achieves Certified Sports Field Manager Status

Congratulations go out to Scott Bills upon passing the Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM) examination this past January at the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) conference in Orlando, Florida. Scott serves on the Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ) Board of Directors as Chapter Secretary. Don Savard, CSFM, CGM and SFMANJ President caught-up with Scott to talk with him about becoming a CSFM in this SFMANJ Update contribution.

Please tell us about yourself, Scott.

I graduated from Cook College, Rutgers University in 1980 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resource Management. I played varsity baseball at RU for 3 years, earning all-conference and a free agent contract in the Red Sox organization. After a very short stint in professional ball I headed west. I have worked in forestry, tree service companies, as a landscape contractor, built sports fields and golf courses, as an industry consultant and since 2005 in sales with Northern Nurseries, Turf Products Division. My position at Northern allows me to help provide turf, sports field and horticultural solutions to customers I enjoy working with, including schools, municipalities, private sports organizations and construction companies. Baseball is still a passion. I fit in about 40 games per year in an over 30 league as a member of the New Jersey Reds.

Why did you want to become a Certified Sports Field Manager?

With over 20 years in the golf course and sports field industries, I understood golf course superintendents were way ahead of sport turf managers in education, experience and professionalism, as perceived by the public and their own supervisors. I realized I wanted to play a bigger role in bringing more respect to position of 'sports turf manager.'

In addition, as a contractor I was constantly frustrated by the poor designs and construction specifications put out by

engineers and architects. In many cases, these professionals are learning about designing fields on the dime of the public. Over the past 8-10 years, I have worked for several bonding companies, municipalities and school boards doing forensic

work, to determine what went wrong or why athletic fields have failed. I still see specifications with roots zones, grass seed varieties, fertilizer formulations and drainage plans that have been out of date for years or are no longer accepted practice within the industry. In addition, many sports fields are allowed to be built by road builders or other site contractors who have minimal experience and do not understand the nuances of sports field construction. For the above two reasons, I felt to be a respected source of information and guidance, I needed to first qualify for the CSFM test and then pass it.

How did you prepare for the exam?

I referred to the STMA website for required subject matter and what books were available to study for the

test. A CSFM that I know heard I was going to take the test and was kind enough, to lend me six or so books covering Agronomics, Soils, Pest Management, Sports Field Construction, Irrigation, Mathematics, Administration and Sports specific subject matter, all necessary to prepare for the test. Once I dove into reading the books, I had two thoughts, what did I get myself into, and I am actually learning something. The hardest part about studying for the test is not the work, but trying to figure out what was going to be on the test. Am I wasting my time trying to learn all of the soil classifications, how to calibrate a 16' wide sprayer traveling 8 mph with 12 nozzles putting out 60 ounces of fungicide every 20 seconds or does perennial ryegrass produce roots, shoots, tiller or stolons. What I did figure out is if I wanted to be a 'Certified Sports Field Manager' I had better know these answers (or at least 80% of them).



Scott Bills, CSFM, earned his Certified Sports Field Manager accreditation at the 2010 STMA Conference, in Orlando, FL.

Scott Bills (continued)

Tell us what the test was like?

The test was given in 4 sections (Agronomics, Pest Management, Administration and Sport Specific). The Agronomics and Sport Specific sections were 100 questions each, the Pest Management and Administration were 50 questions each. All questions are multiple choices with 4 possible answers.

Numerous questions involved calculations (had to brush up on my Algebra), but most were simply knowing the right answer. Some questions were very easy, leaving you wonder if it was a trick question. In hindsight, it was probably just my mind playing tricks on me. I was able to finish the test in 3 hours; the allowable time is four hours.

How does it feel now to have passed the test?

Earning the designation as a 'Certified Sports Field Manager' gives you the feeling of accomplishment and confidence. Any existing sport turf manager who has considerable field experience, but is not taken seriously by their peers, supervisors or administrators, will immediately feel more

competent. Knowledge, confidence and communication skills are needed to succeed in this business (and most others). The CSFM process is a big step (but still only a step) in a sports turf managers career. Individual career development through continued education, networking, and chapter involvement will help bring the sports turf management industry to a higher professional level one person at a time.

What advice do you have for anyone thinking about becoming a CSFM?

Don't be afraid to jump in. I found out I can still swim. Any existing sports turf manager who feels they qualify for the designation of 'Certified Sports Field Manager,' should apply to take the test. Simply go to the STMA website, submit the required documents and get qualified. The test can be taken during the annual STMA conference (Austin, TX - January 2010) or in your own state with a proctor. As was my experience, any existing CSFM, is more than willing to help. This is something you can do for yourself to advance your career.

DID YOU KNOW?

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