

# SPORTS FIELD MANAGERS

## Conference & Exhibition

By Kevin Rundstrom

The Rutgers Turf Club would like to thank Rutgers University, Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ), and Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) for making our visit to Long Beach to attend the 2012 STMA Conference and Exhibition possible. Without these organizations we would have not had the opportunity to experience the National Conference.

The Rutgers Turf Club sent a team of four students to compete in the Student Challenge. We also attended the education sessions and industry trade show. The conference was a great way for students interested in pursuing careers in sports turf to network and interact with many in the industry. Three students were first-time underclassmen attendees and will be able to compete and attend again in the future. We believe that the STMA Conference allows for wonderful student activities and networking potential.

Our first day was not limited to travel. We were able to arrive in Long Beach and have time to sign-in and attend the Student Networking Session. Over the next few days we attended many talks that were specifically designed for students. One session entailed two professional sports field managers and an international university professor. Darian Daily from the Cincinnati Bengals was one of the two sports field managers. Darian gave a presentation titled, "The 'Real' Story of Being an NFL Sports Field Manager." During his presentation he spoke of his journey that we all will soon make and how he ended-up with the Cincinnati Bengals. He also detailed many of the daily activities a sports field manager performs. His presentation described how one must continue to learn and speak to people to be well informed beyond graduating. Another professional sports field manager, Larry DiVito, Minnesota Twins gave a presentation titled, "What it Takes to be an MLB Field Maintenance Manager." Throughout his speech he described his daily activities. It was very good to see how two professional managers in different sports share similar ideas and tactics to ensure high performance fields. Ian Lacy is an international professor and he was able to give insight into looking for international experiences as part of his presentation called, "Broaden Your Horizons Through International Experiences." He began with a story of his

travels and how sports fields and academia helped him work, study, and live in countries all over the world.

One of our favorite sessions of the trip included one of our professors at Rutgers University, Brad Park. On the panel of speakers with him was Bill Deacon of the New York Mets, Dr. Gwen Stahnke, Dr. John Rogers, and Tim VanLoo. They opened the floor to question after question and each person was able to give their own opinion and knowledge of the subject. The talk was titled, "Cool Season Turfgrasses: New Varieties for Sports Turf and Management Tips from the Pros."

The trade shows allowed for students to see companies and meet people from those companies that fuel the sports turf industry. These are the people that help make our profession a reality. Talking to these companies and seeing new products is one of the most exciting aspects every year.

The main reason for us going to Long Beach was to compete for our school in the student challenge. We competed against over 30 teams and placed 16<sup>th</sup>. Scores were very close and we were pleased with how our test went. The test is made-up with multiple choice, short answer and identification that includes turfgrass, weeds, insects, diseases, and irrigation parts. The Turf Club is eager to get back to STMA in 2013 and compete again for Rutgers.

Once again we would like to thank Rutgers University, SFMANJ, STMA, and Rutgers Turf Club for enabling us to attend. It is always an honor to be able to represent our university, turf program, and all the people we are lucky enough to work beside and learn from. Thank you!

*Kevin Rundstrom is Undergraduate Student, Rutgers University; and 2012 STMA Student Challenge Team Member representing Rutgers University*

*The Rutgers Student Challenge Team received a tour of the Toro Booth during the 2012 STMA Conference and Exhibition in Long Beach, CA*

