

EDUCATION REVIEW

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iTurfExpo



We live in a time of change. What was, no longer is. The entire golf industry/economy has been turned on its proverbial head. Everyone is trying to do more with less. People are being creative to find ways to maintain/sustain the same level of performance or service without sacrificing the quality. Somehow, all of our people are out there are performing "smoke and mirror" magic acts to make it all work. The ITF (Illinois Turfgrass Foundation) is no different. In a world where there is less money available to promote turfgrass research, the ITF is challenged to continue to do what they do.

The ITF, in response to needing to make changes embarked on a new path this summer. The iTurfExpo replaced the IPTC (Illinois Professional Turfgrass Conference) as the ITF's primary educational/fundraising event. The IPTC was a two day event but held during the winter months indoors. This year's event was the iTurfExpo which was also a two day event but it utilized the venue of the Sunshine Course at the Golf House in Lemont. This year's event was also designed to be a much more "hands on" field experience.

Let's recap the changes:

1) Date 2) Location 3) Name change 4) Venue 5) Format.

So I talked to a bunch of people who attended and here's what I came up with.

Positives:

- The weather was great on Tuesday and the Sunshine course looked beautiful.
- We got to see some research results onsite, in real time.
- In person observation of trials is better than all power point slides you can see in the middle of winter.
- The Vendor product demonstrations were more than just kicking the tires. We could actually start stuff up and drive them.
- All of the education was in the field.
- The overhead costs were significantly less for the ITF by utilizing the Golf House facility. This cost was passed on to all attendees.



- Money was raised for turfgrass research, the main function of the ITF.
- The show provided the usual networking opportunities with other turf related professionals and vendors.
- A golf event was held across the street at the newly renovated Dubs Dread.

Negatives:

- The weather Wednesday wasn't the best, but we of all people should understand.
- It seemed like the turnout was less than expected. All turf related businesses are in peak season and many people did not attend.
- There wasn't as much classroom education. (Although, I learned later this was planned. ITF is offering full day workshops the week of December 14, Frank Rossi is slated to speak one day.)
- The vendors were too spread out and the set up did not channel attendees into a concentrated area like the indoor show.

So there you have it. Clearly the iTurfExpo is a work in progress and the Board will continue to tweak changes and make improvements. Sometimes change can be a difficult process. Bottom line, it was good for the ITF, which is good for you. **-OC**