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Turf Conference

The last issue of OC Covered the 60th meeting of the Midwest Turf Clinic. This issue we take a look at the 1st Turf Conference.

In 2013, the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation re-invented its offering for the winter education meetings. This year they came up with sort of a “blast from the past” with the introduction of Turf Conference. In some ways it reminded me of the events they used to hold at Pheasant Run Resort (minus the trade show). The 2013 Turf Conference featured education for golf, sports turf, lawn care and general turf. Each education track was designed by committees from thorough feedback from the profession they represent. They featured some of the best speakers available on those topics.

The event was held at the Hyatt Lodge in Oak Brook, also known as Hamburger University. The educational offerings were designed to be the “epicenter” for All Things Turf for ITF members. The ITF’s goal of the Turf Conference was to keep it simple, straightforward, provide high quality current education and to facilitate the expansion of networks by promoting/building relationships. Vendors had small displays, set up on high top tables in a very cozy space. With the close location of food and drink it was a good set up for networking. It appeared unanimous in the conversations I had with vendors and attendees: Everyone seemed to like the new format and new location.

Each morning began at 8:00 with a coffee and roll mixer. Attendees “woke up” with some delicious McDonalds coffee and conversation. Education started at 9:00 for each of the tracks in the very nice theatre settings.

The topics that were covered went into great detail. Speakers left plenty of time for thorough question and answer sessions.

Some highlights included:

- Dr. Derek Settle of the CDGA presented a very interesting and in depth analysis of the “2012 Year in Review.” He’s had some time for the dust to settle (giggle) to review the data and provide some insight as to what happened where, when, why and how. One clear take away message is that after the hot dry June and July, if we didn’t get that cool down period



Dr. Trey Rogers, Michigan State University lists the benefits of topdressing fairways: Increased infiltration, dilute thatch accumulation, reduced disease incidence, less earthworm castings, fewer traffic restrictions, improved playability.

in August, the death toll would have been much higher as most of the *Poa* was already “out of gas.”

- Dr. Trey Rodgers of Michigan State University led a presentation on “All Things Putting Green Drainage.” He went into the details of the physics of drainage principals and outlined various drainage options. Scott Pavalko shared his experience with the Sub-Air systems in use at Cog Hill Country Club. Brian Thompson from Biltmore Country Club explained his experience with installing XGD drainage “in-house.” Kyle Jacobsen from Twin Orchard Country Club made an informative presentation on their work to install XGD drainage and aggressively modify the soil profile their greens. Dave Behrman, CGCS discussed his use of the PC drainage system at Midlothian Country Club.

- Dr. Rogers came back after lunch to present on “Sand Topdressing Fairways – State of the Art for the Midwest.” If you like firm and fast, this was good stuff.

- Dr. Kevin Frank also from Michigan State University went into great detail on “The Effects of Granular, Foliar and Combination Fertilizer Programs on Turf Performance.”

- Our own Dr. Tom Voigt from the University of Illinois shared his research on “Fescue Management for Golf Courses.”

There was so much information I missed. I wish I could have attended some of the other education tracks. For a turf geek, this was it. There was a lot of great information to take back and begin to formulate an agronomic plan, or in layman’s terms “just what the heck are we going to do to manage our turf and keep it alive in 2013.”

There are no easy or inexpensive answers to managing turf in the mid-west. But local education events like the ITF Turf Conference, where you can share common experiences with your peers, gather new information about new products, learn new tactics and techniques, and can only make your job and your operation better. Mission accomplished **ITF**.