



# Research: A Student's Perspective...

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The following article will guide you through a season of research from my perspective as a student at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Debating my 2000 summer employment, I chose to learn from the research community stationed at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. Similar to the six summers I worked at Turtleback G & CC in northwest Wisconsin, sod was still placed green side up, irrigation trenches were occasionally excavated by hand, and the early morning brigade of mowers daily cut straight lines through the dew. I did expect to be challenged with the insight of the research team, but I also hoped to contribute to their work even if it was simply through a strong work ethic. Although the rectangular plots appear in contrast to the sweeping curves of the neighboring golf courses, they provide relevant information that increases the efficiency of our turfgrass industry. The 500+ visitors to the annual WTA Summer Field Day received first hand exposure to that information.

A unique feature of the research station is the incredibly diverse environment that is contained in less than 10 acres. That small area balances multiple turfgrass species and cultivars, diseases, chemical applications, management schemes, and several years of collaborative experience from the research team. For example, a Kentucky bluegrass study containing roughly 130 cultivars, each seeded by hand, was established last fall. It would be difficult for anyone to have consistent exposure to this diversity outside of the research setting.

In January, the summer research was released at the WTA EXPO for the benefit of the turfgrass industry, conveniently provided as management budgets are compiled during the "off season." I enjoyed knowing that the research I helped conduct would contribute to the efficiency of our industry. A month later, I attended the 2001 GCSAA national convention in Dallas, Texas. Part of the activities for students was a tour of the Texas A&M turfgrass research station followed by a visit to the ballpark at Arlington, home of the Texas Rangers. Dr. Milt Engelke, Texas A&M turfgrass researcher and a UW-Madison alumnus, guided the students through the main attractions of the station and introduced several other researchers including Dr. James Read and Dr. Dennis Genovesi. Their work is similar in function to the work conducted at the O.J. Noer Facility but focuses primarily on warm season grasses. Instead of 130 Kentucky bluegrass cultivars, they displayed greenhouses packed with

plugs of zoysiagrass cultivars.

The Texas Rangers 'new' ballpark at Arlington, constructed in 1996, was recently sodded with washed Tifsport Bermuda grass and still displayed the distinct edge of each sod piece. Head superintendent Tom Burns presented the challenges he faces; the most immediate concern was establishing the sod for the first game with less than optimum growing conditions. This was refreshing news knowing that another ballpark besides Miller Park was pressed for time to create the perfect opening day field! I topped off the memories of that trip by running a home run lap and catching a view from the home team dugout.

In March, I attended the Reinder's Convention in Waukesha where several researchers and industry representatives presented a wide range of material. Dr. John Stier addressed concerns regarding the pro-



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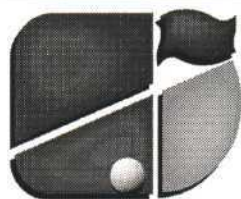


posed regulations outlined in NR151 by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. His comments convinced me to attend that evening's public review of NR151 held at the Fitchburg Center in Fitchburg, WI. Dr. Stier presented the concern that the proposed non-agricultural regulations were not developed with consideration of the research conducted by institutions such as Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin - Madison, both well respected turfgrass research institutions. This is a perfect example of the necessity of political and public relations for the correct representation of our industry.

Throughout the winter months, I aided Jeff Gregos at the Turfgrass Diagnostics Lab with several *in vitro* studies on the suppressive effects of fungicides for snow mold resistance. This winter season provided ideal conditions for snow mold damage throughout the state proving that we need continued research to efficiently manage this disease.

Before my summer experience at the O.J. Noer Facility, I held an uninformed, skeptical opinion of the relevance of the work conducted at the Facility. Now I'm convinced that research is the lifeblood of the turfgrass industry. There are several benefits of working as a turfgrass research assistant: 1) intense interaction with professors and professionals that will help to develop lifetime contacts, 2) a wealth of applicable information, and 3) the formation of a respectful, well-rounded understanding of the industry.

I want to credit the hard working professors, graduate students, and full-time staff at the O.J. Noer Facility for their professional attitude and direction that has made my experience very enjoyable. I look forward to the 2001 season with eager anticipation of a research project of my own and the opportunity to positively influence your occupation. The past year of exposure to research will definitely complement my career choice, and therefore I encourage any student to look for these opportunities. ♣



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