



The US Open for Sod Production

By Tom Schwab, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Summer Field Day 2007 was to the sod industry what the PGA Championship or US Open means to the golf community. Field Day 2007 was the conclusion of a week long conference of seminars, meetings, clinics and tours for sod producers from around the world. Producers came from 13 different countries, including USA, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, England, Northern Ireland, Russia, Korea, Sweden, Netherlands, Austria, Ukraine, and South Africa, to attend the Turf Producers International Summer Conference and Field Day held in Madison from July 21 to 26. The final day of the conference was the field day at the OJ Noer Facility which combined forces between Turfgrass Producers International, the Midwest Sod Council, and the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association, to display 15 acres of trade show, turfgrass research tours, and much more.

There were 1,130 attendees who visited the Noer Facility on July 25 and 26 for Field Day 2007. The evening of July 25 was Family Night, which was enjoyed by guests who came from as far away as Russia and Australia. As well as a preview of the trade show, Family Night included games, fire-



Over 1,100 attendees visited the OJ Noer facility for this year's combined WTA, TPI, MSC Field Day

works, prizes, dinner, a turf court tennis demonstration by John Powless (Senior Tennis Player of the Millennium), and an ultralight plane fly-over.

Thursday, July 26, was the actual field day which included the WTA trade show, a hearty Wisconsin breakfast and lunch, great research tour, tent city of turfgrass products, and demonstrations of mowers, harvesters, tiller, forklifts and

everything else related to sod production. The field day included 113 different exhibitors who offered so much to see. In addition to the trade show, an all inclusive research tour was conducted by your UW-Madison turf team that presented new research data for all turfgrass professions.

The field day was the culmination of over two years of preparation which started with an idea from George Brandt of American Sod Corporation and Vice President of Turfgrass Producers International. The field day had always been held on sod farms but George and others on the TPI board thought about the unique opportunity of conducting the field day at a university turf research site to combine the trade show with cutting edge research education.

The professors and I thought this would be a great idea to place

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Texas A&M professor and UW-Madison Grad Kurt Stienke returned to Field Day to present a talk



Wednesday night provided fun for the whole family

UW-Madison turf research in front of the world, but we only had six acres of unused turf to perform a field day that traditionally is held on 30 to 40 acres. We looked around and saw four adjacent fields of corn that we asked to take out of production for three years and were granted permission to do so. Then the work

began. Rusty Stachlewitz from the Midwest Sod Council, Kelly Butler from Turfgrass Producers International, Tom Wright from the West Madison Ag Research Station, every member of the Wisconsin Sod Producers Association, past and future hosts of TPI Field Day on the logistics committee, and so many

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industry sponsors all stepped forward to make the combined TPI-MS-C-WTA Field Day a reality.

Then Mother Nature had to do her part. She helped with good weather to grow in and initially maintain the new 20 acres of turf. The weather in early 2007 was great for developing good deep roots to enter the summer stress season. But then the drought began. Our Kifco water reel irrigation gun, donated by Robert's Irrigation, ran for 18 hours a day for most of the summer, especially the five weeks before field day when we only received one small rain storm of less than a half inch. But come field day, I was happy with drought conditions and firm grounds when I saw sixty semi trailers delivering equipment to our trade show. It finally rained the night of field day but by then 95% of the trade show was broken



The ever popular lunch tent is always a hit at field day

down and taken away. Some of the remaining ten semi trucks that came for equipment the next day had to be pulled out of the mud with a Caterpillar scraper that was working next door on University Ridge. The resulting mess was not important because those fields will

be planted back to corn next year. However, if that rain came before field day, I don't want to think about what a disaster it would have caused!


So much planning and some luck all fell into place to really show off the Noer Facility. I'd like



Bird's eye view of the 2007 Summer Field Day

to thank everyone involved including those who came as attendees or exhibitors. The list of WTA exhibitors is shown here on right. The 79 exhibitors that displayed for TPI and MSC are also appreciated.


This was such a huge event and I hope you were able to attend. You could have collected at least 10 new golf caps without even trying. More importantly, you would have witnessed an event that brought people from half way around the globe to learn more about turfgrass management. The field day and TPI conference may not be quite as splashy as a US Open golf championship, but for so many people to come from as far away as they did, it had just as much importance.

More photos from Summer Field Day 2007 are shown on pages 46-48 for you to enjoy. 

WTA Summer Field Day '07 Exhibitors

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DHD Tree Products
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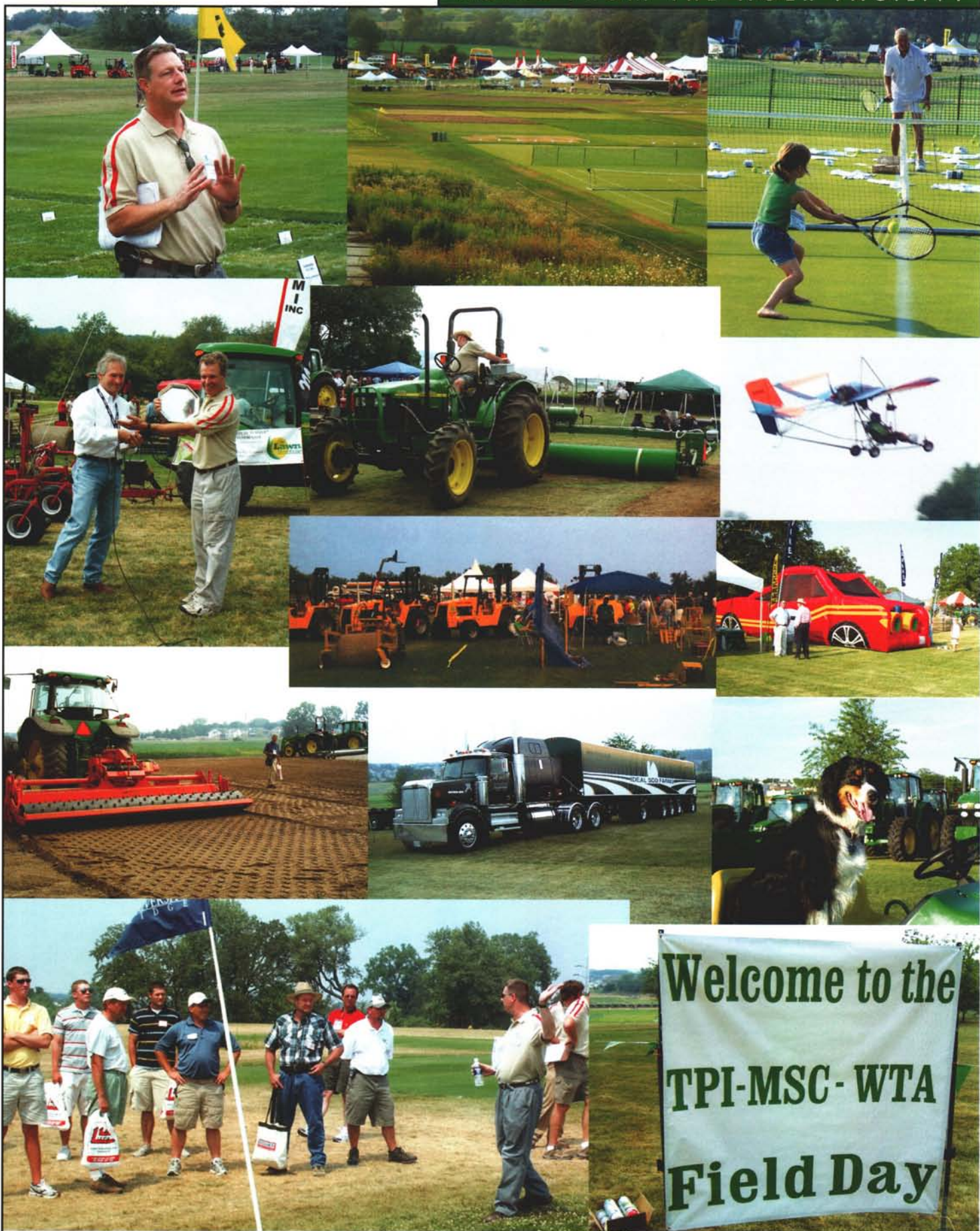
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