

UW Turf Team Visits Norway

By Dr. Doug Soldat, Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin - Madison

In late June, a contingent from the UW Turf program had the opportunity to attend the European Turfgrass Society Conference held in Kristiansand, Norway. The team consisted of myself, Dr. Jim Kerns, his graduate students Paul Koch and Renee Rioux, Dr. John Stier's graduate student Mark Garrison, and Glen Obear who presented the work of his co-advisor Dr. Chris Williamson who had to back out at the last minute because of a conflict. The graduate students all represented the University well by delivering scientific presentations under the overarching theme of maintain-

ing high quality turfgrass using fewer inputs.

Because of the similarities between our climates, Wisconsin's turf research is highly relevant to Norwegian turf managers, and vice versa. Norwegians struggle mightily with annual bluegrass, snow mold, and winter kill. They also have far fewer chemical control strategies available to them, so their research focuses on grass selection and cultural practices to combat these issues. As chemical control strategies are likely to become more restrictive in the future, we will certainly look to places like Norway for guidance.

The conference was organized and hosted by Dr. Trygve Aamlid and his associates at Bioforsk, a research and development institute under Norway's Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Day one consisted of research talks and poster presentations from turf scientists from all over the world followed by a field day at Bioforsk's impressive research station just up the road in Grimstad. We returned back to the hotel just before 11 pm, to a still lighted sky. The sun set around 10:30, but it never gets very dark because the sun lurks just below the horizon until it rises again in the wee hours of the morning. The second and final day of the conference consisted of another full agenda of research presentations.

The highlight of the trip for me was visiting with Jens Arne, one of the turfgrass undergraduates at UW-Madison who was in the middle of an internship at Bioforsk. Jens is double majoring in Soil Science and Scandinavian studies. When he told me this a few years ago as a freshman, I began working to get him an internship experience with Dr. Aamlid where he could combine his passion for turf with his interest in the Norwegian culture. It was a stroke of luck that the internship availability overlapped with the international conference.



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Dr. Aamlid (in pink) describing cultivar evaluation trials with UW students Paul Koch and Renee Rioux in the foreground.

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Jens had been working for Dr. Aamlid for about two months when I visited him. He seemed to be having a great experience, and I could tell he was well liked by his mentors and co-workers. Jens participated in the conference as a tour guide during the field day and helped the speakers attach the lapel microphone during the scientific talks. The most memorable moment for me was during the field day when an ominous looking storm was approaching during a talk made by Dr. Tassiana Espevig of Bioforsk. Dr. Espevig was describing the results of her study in English, then noticed the rapidly developing storm and turned to Jens and told him in Norwegian what I inferred to be instructions for getting everyone to shelter before the storm hit. Jens ran off and made preparations before the storm hit. He was surely mistaken as a local by everyone else, but he made the Wisconsinite's in the group proud!

I appreciate having the opportunity to attend these international events which always provide a unique perspective that I use to improve the quality of my work in Wisconsin. I was very proud to be able to help Jens find an experience he is likely to never forget, and one that he will look back on as something that unified his seemingly incongruous double majors of Soil Science and Scandinavian Studies. The graduate students earned a valuable experience to practice scientific communication and were able to meet colleagues and discuss research in a unique setting. Overall, the trip was an unqualified success!



An ominous looking storm approaches the tour group. I've heard that Norwegians are notoriously nonchalant about inclement weather. This stereotype was perpetuated during the field day. We entered the storm shelter about fifteen seconds before the driving rain began.



Jens Arneson (in black, holding blue flag) is a UW-Madison turf undergraduate who spent his summer working for Dr. Aamlid at the Bioforsk turfgrass research station.