

Sports Turf Managers' Certification Program

STEVE TRUSTY

We were pleased to have the Executive Director of the Sports Turf Managers' Association (STMA) with us for the symposium. Steve has a very busy schedule and was on his way to the STMA Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, following his visit to Ontario. In his talk, he provided informative statistics and a brief outline about the certification program for sports turf managers that the STMA has developed in the U.S.

STMA History and Membership

The STMA was founded in 1981 by Harry Gill, Dick Ericson, Dr. Bill Daniels, and George Toma. They then incorporated in 1985. Their purpose was to share information, train, network, educate, and enhance professionalism in the industry. The STMA is an organization of professionals who represent all segments of the sports turf industry. We work to combine the science of growing grass and the art of maintaining sports fields in a safe and aesthetically pleasing manner.

Benefits of joining the organization include education through regional institutes and conferences; support for sports turf research; a national awards program; access to the STA National Conference and Exhibition; and complimentary subscriptions to the *Sports Turf Manager* and *Sports Turf Magazine*.

There are different membership categories ranging from:

- Professional sports turf facility manager
- 4-year college and university sports turf facility manager
- Other schools, research, extension agents, teaching
- Parks and recreational sports turf facilities
- Commercial (U.S. or international)
- Student (non-visiting)
- International (other than commercial)

Parks and recreation make up about 14.4% of membership, commercial 17.6%, and students 5%. There are also nine chapters which comprise some 1200 members and an additional 1200 national members. Sports turf industry generated approximately 1.5 billion dollars in 1997 representing about 40,000 facilities.

Chapters perform service work. For example, they may build a pitcher's mound for a high school who has neither the money nor the expertise. This sometimes takes up to two days work! It is often advertised in the local paper, which helps generate pride in the school and recognition for the STMA. When the City of Muscatine, Illinois, won a national award for soccer field of the year, its mayor went to Anaheim, California, to receive the award!

Certification

The purpose of the certification program is to raise the turf industry's degree of professionalism. It establishes credentials through education, experience, knowledge, and testing. Furthermore, it provides recognition for professionals, creates better salaries, and increases opportunities for education and training. Professional baseball has said they want to hire certified Sports Field Managers.

A point system has been worked out where an individual would need to accrue 40 points to apply for testing. Points would be awarded for education, for each year of experience, etc. Testing

would be multiple lists of questions on various subject matter with 80% required to pass in each section. Some areas would include pesticides, agronomics, sports specific, etc. Persons would be awarded a Certified Sports Turf Manager (CSTM) and would have to abide by a code of ethics and be subject to a board of review.

The whole certification process has been ongoing for the last year and will be voted on at our Annual General Meeting in Orlando.

To conclude, STMA has had a 50% increase in membership, including several international members. Numbers now seem to have stabilized. We have gold and silver levels of sponsors with companies like Novartex, Scotts and Hunter contributing. The following awards are given by the Association yearly:

- STMA/Beam Clay® Sports Turf Magazine
Baseball Diamond of the Year
- STMA Softball Field of the Year
- STMA Football Field of the Year
- STMA Soccer Field of the Year
- STMA Founders' Awards: The Dick Ericson Award; The George Toma Golden Rake Award; The Dr. William H. Daniel Award; and the Harry C. Gill Award. ♦

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STA President Chris Mark (right) thanks Steve Trusty, Executive Director of the STMA, for his informative talk at the Ontario Turfgrass Symposium.