

UPDATE

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GEORGE TOMA:

"Do The Job. . .And Then Some"

Brad Park*



"I've been in the game 64 years and I'm still learning." George Toma, field consultant for all 40 Super Bowls addressed attendees at SFMANJ's 2006 Summer Demonstration Field Day held at the County College of Morris, Randolph, NJ.

The phrase, "Do the job ... and then some" was among the words of advice offered by George Toma, longtime Super Bowl consultant and universally-known sports field manager, in delivering several talks during Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey's (SFMANJ) Summer Demonstration Field Day held at the County College of Morris, Randolph, NJ on June 28, 2006.

Toma began the day's program by recounting his time growing-up in blue collar Northeastern Pennsylvania. While working on a sports field in Wilkes-Barre, PA, he noted that the best weed control he ever encountered came by way of workers from a local streetcar barn who came to his sports field with knives and "controlled" the dandelions. The broadleaf delicacies would later be part of a salad.

As his resume blossomed, Toma recalled being given an offer by the New York Yankees, "The Yankees always wanted me to come to New York ... but New York was too big." After Yankee management suggested he could live in Tenafly or Teaneck to avoid the hustle and bustle of NYC and simply cross the George Washington Bridge to go to work, Toma responded, "I didn't want to pay the 50-cent toll."

Nicknamed the "Marquis de Sod", Toma has witnessed many changes in the sports field industry. In 1957 in Kansas City, the local sod farm

consisted of a cow pasture, Toma recalled. Later in his career, Toma oversaw the sodding of the Superdome in New Orleans with 40 ft-long by 8 ft-wide strips of sod that individually weighed 4000 lbs.

Noting that, "People expect too much from natural grass and give too little", Toma shared his insight on the agronomics of sports field management. He emphasized the need for seed-to-soil contact during establishment and encouraged people to aerify, specifically developing a deep tine aerification program. He suggested using the popular Aera-Vator once per week in heavily trafficked goal mouth areas with the PTO disengaged to aerify and apply seed using the seed box attachment. On the issue of mowing, Toma wisely asserted, "If you don't have the time to check the sharpness of a [mower] blade, you don't have time to cut grass."

To the groundskeepers in attendance, Toma ended with, "You're unsung heroes. You're my idols."



The SFMANJ Board of Directors with the "Marquis de Sod", George Toma. Pictured (l-r): Craig Tolley; Don Savard, CSFM and SFMANJ Vice President; Ken Mathis, SFMANJ President; Joe Warner, CSFM; George Toma; Karl "Chuckie" Singer; Jeff Cramer, El Hermann, SFMANJ Past President; Brad Park, Editor, SFMANJ Update; Fred Castenschild.

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