

A RUTGERS' STUDENT RECALLS HIS EXPERIENCE AT STMA

By: Eric Koch

As a student at Rutgers University striving towards a degree in the turf industry, it is extremely hard to find time to see the innovation and evolution of the turf industry in the real world. This year's Sports Turf Manager Association 2009 conference was a wonderful thing for me to experience because I was able to see how competitive and innovative the turf industry really is. Along with all of the great new things I saw at the trade show, the people I met at the STMA conference were all knowledgeable and may become a great asset to me in the future as I strive toward my career in the turf industry. Set in beautiful San Jose California, the conference was an experience that I will never forget.

The networking that I was able to do at the STMA conference was priceless. I was able to meet many very well known people in the turf industry and discuss some of what they do to manage and improve their particular sports field. Meeting some of the speakers after their very educational talks also allowed me to gain a deeper insight into what they do as individuals and hold more in depth discussions regarding some materials they discussed. I enjoyed the talks that were given as they were all very informative and extremely interesting to me. When I came back from San Jose, I had a tighter grasp on how the turf industry operates and how each individual helps one another to better the overall playability of all sports fields.

At the trade show, it was incredible to see all of the innovative designs and ideas that companies have created. All of the employees of each company were fascinating people with which to talk and listen. After looking around the entire trade show for a couple of hours, it was amazing to see the different routes sports field managers take and how

they choose specific products to manage their own fields back home. Each exhibit had something new and improved that I had learned about in books, but until the conference, had not seen in person. It was great to get a hands-on look at everything that is new and upcoming in the turf industry.

The student challenge examination was a comprehensive test of everything a sports field manager would need to know within the turf field. This exam consisted of turfgrass identification, disease identification, weed identification, irrigation formulas, physiology, calibration of turf equipment, writing 2 essays, and many other concepts within the turf field. The examination itself took a few hours of hard work and thinking but really showed the vast amount of information that is involved in managing a sports field.

The experience at the San Jose STMA conference was a real treat for me, and I think it is safe to say, for anyone else who was there as well. The food was delicious, the people were interesting and extremely polite, and the atmosphere was perfect. This conference really showed me how people from all over the world can come together to learn and celebrate the turf industry.

Eric Koch is an undergraduate student, Rutgers University, and member of the Rutgers' team that competed in the STMA Student Challenge in San Jose, CA in January 2009



California dreamin' at STMA (l-r) Brad Park, Rutgers University, Editor, SFMANJ Update; Eric Koch, Rutgers University, STMA Student Challenge participant; Stephanie Alea, Rutgers University, STMA Student Challenge participant; Will Reardon, Rutgers University, STMA Student Challenge participant; Don Savard, CSEM, CGM, SFMANJ President.



The 2009 STMA Annual Conference included a tour of the sportsfield facilities at Stanford University, Stanford, CA