

A Student's Perspective on the 2013 Sports Turf Managers Association Conference and Exhibition

By Erik Taylor

The Rutgers Turf Club would like to thank Rutgers University, Sports Field Managers Association of New Jersey (SFMANJ), and Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) for making our visit to Dayton Beach, Florida to attend the 2013 STMA Conference and Exhibition possible. Without these organizations we would have not had the opportunity to experience the National Conference and Student Challenge that we enjoy taking part-in to represent the wonderful program here at Rutgers University as well as the State of New Jersey in which we call home.

The Rutgers Turf Club sent two teams of four students to compete in the Student Challenge. We also attended the education sessions and industry trade show. The conference was a great way for students interested in pursuing careers in sports turf to network and interact with many in the industry. Five students were first-time upperclassmen attendees and will be able to compete and attend again in the future. We believe that the STMA Conference allows for wonderful student activities and networking potential as well as an additional tool for those who have a chance to attend the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) conference later in the semester in which a blend of the experiences learned from sports turf and golf maintenance can be applied to further research for the industry.

Our first day was not limited to travel. We were able to arrive in Daytona Beach and have time to sign-in and attend the Student Networking Session along with the Welcome Reception which had a great keynote speaker this year.

Over the next few days we attended many talks that were specifically designed for students. One session entailed two professional sports field managers and an international university professor. Darian Daily from the Cincinnati Bengals was one of the many sports field managers from the pro level to parks and recreation level that attended the conference and gave a wonderful talk. Darian gave a presentation titled, "The 'Real' Story of Being an NFL Sports Field Manager." During his presentation he spoke of his journey that we all will soon make and how he ended-up with the Cincinnati Bengals. He also detailed many of the daily activities a sports field manager performs. His presentation described how one must continue to learn and speak to people to be well informed beyond graduating. Other professional sports field manager, Luke Yoder and John Turnour, gave presentations titled, "What it Takes to be an MLB Field Groundskeeper." Throughout his speech he described his daily activities. It was very good to see how three professional managers in different sports share similar ideas and tactics to ensure high performance fields. Dr. Jason Kruse also gave us a wonderful speech about how students should take their first steps into the sports field industry. He simplified the steps of working in the industry and the steps it takes to work your way up the competitive ladder in providing high quality athletic fields which in turn lead to high quality performance.

One of our favorite sessions of the trip was the talk on the New Trends and Technology in Sports Turf ". This talk allowed many to hear about the technological innovations of the new modern era in the sports field industry. We got to here from companies like Bulldog Field Equipment, Xtreme Turf Makeover, Wiedenmann North America, Performance Nutrition, PICKSEED, and Campey Turf Care Systems. Many of these companies are growing, which is a sign of our ever-evolving industry and the many contributions that can be made to it.



The trade shows allowed for students to see companies and meet people from those companies that fuel the sports turf industry. These are the people that help make our profession a reality. Talking to these companies and seeing new products is one of the most exciting aspects every year.

A primary reason for us going to Daytona Beach was to compete for our school in the Student Challenge. We competed against over 30 teams and placed 6th which consisted of (Kyle Genova, Nick Delmar, Kenneth Macnish, and Erik Taylor). Our other team of (Greg Benz, Henry Qu, Tyler Astor, and Jason Sun) also did well placing 13th out of over 30 teams. Scores were very close and we were pleased with our performance. The Student Challenge exam is made-up of multiple choice, short answer and identification that include turfgrass, weeds, insects, diseases, soils and equipment parts. The Turf Club is eager to get back to STMA in 2014 and compete again for Rutgers.

Once again we would like to thank Rutgers University, SFMANJ, STMA, and Rutgers Turf Club for enabling us to attend. It is always an honor to be able to represent our university, turf program, and all the people we are lucky enough to work beside and learn from. Thank you!

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