

# A Student's Perspective on the 2014 Sports Turf Managers Association Conference and Exhibition

By Lorabeth West

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 San Antonio, Texas to attend the 2014 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 our home state of New Jersey.

This year, the Rutgers Turf Club sent two teams of four students to compete in the STMA student challenge, where we also attended educational sessions and the industry trade show. The conference is a great way for students interested in pursuing careers in sports turf to network and interact with many different people and factors of the industry. We believe that the STMA conference allows for wonderful student activities and networking potential. This also helps to set the stage for those



who have a chance to attend the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) conference later in the semester. As students we seize the opportunity to attend both conferences because it allows us to develop knowledge of the turfgrass industry from its multiple aspects.

Our first full day in San Antonio was a beautiful one. We were able to sign in for the convention, where we were later invited to the welcome reception, and then spent our day touring The Alamo and finding the best tacos in town. The welcome reception offered a chance for us to meet many different members of STMA in the industry, some of which were our own Rutgers alumni that are now holding positions all over the country. Many shared with us their own personal experiences of when they took part in the student challenge in their glory days of college. It was amazing to see their passion for the industry and ask them for tips on how we can better ourselves.

The following day was dedicated to educational sessions; one was specifically designed for students and the other two were specific aspects of the industry. The first session we attended was one entitled, "Creating a New Career Path," given by Abby McNeal of Wake Forest University, CSFM. Abby gave a motivating talk on how to locate a job that is right for you and how everyday aspects are keys to your success. She told us the of the positions she has

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held in the industry and what factors helped her to choose those jobs, holding education at the top of her list. I remember her mentioning that we are in a science field, and that means it is constantly changing and your employers should respect that and want to send you to these educational conferences. The group of students in the room became interactive when Abby asked questions of where we wanted to work, why, and what is important to us. It generated a group thought process that we all found inspirational and beneficial.



The next session we attended was, "Cool Season Turfgrasses for Sports Fields," given by one of our turf club advisors, Brad Park. Brad gave a very informative lecture on turfgrass selection, such as what factors to look at when making your selection, tips on seed purchasing, and providing information of cultivars from the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP). There were many pictures in the presentation that were used as references to make the explanations seamless, including case studies, methods of sodding and seeding, and different diseases that may infect the grasses.



The third and final lecture we attended was, "Sustainability- Player Safety- Performance Testing Are Critical and Integrated Issues for Sports Fields," given by Dr. Gerald Henry, a Rutgers alum, and one of his current graduate students at the University of Georgia, Chase Straw. This presentation was different than any we had seen before, as it was using new technology to test the sustainability on sports fields. These new technologies included global positioning systems, global information systems, and sensors, which are used to make color contour maps of sports fields. These maps visually show the troubled areas of sports fields, making it easy to see where there is too much or too little irrigation, for example. This can have a major effect on player safety, making irrigation efficiency a topic of concern. The machine they used to create the contour maps is a new piece of equipment by Toro called the PS 6000, but it is still being tested. This lecture was fascinating and raised many questions in the room, all of which helped us to better understand their methods and goals. We look forward to hearing more about their research and how it will help the industry.

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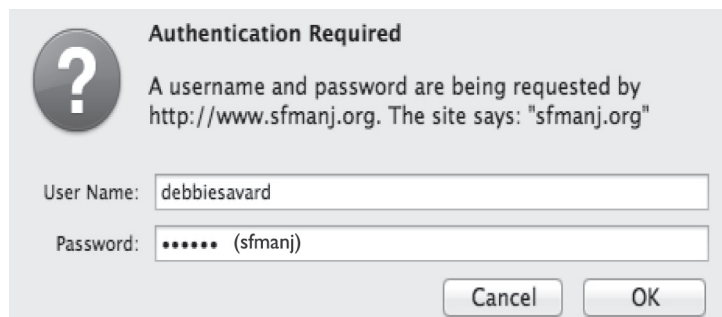
# Navigating the new password protected area on our web site!

By Debbie Savard

To use this Members Only feature you will need to use a **User Name and a Password.**

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When the lectures were over, we attended the annual meeting luncheon, where the new STMA Board of Directors was introduced and awards were given. A short film made on STMA was also shown, one that will play on PBS and is informative to viewers about the industry and the importance of those who work it in. Afterwards, we walked the tradeshow floor - on the hunt for any clues and help we could obtain to help us in the student challenge. We visited Hunter Irrigation, Diamond Pro, Toro, Jacobsen, John Deere, and many other booths. Members of the turf club were able to speak with professionals in the industry and look for potential jobs and internships. It was a wonderful networking opportunity and a perfect time to see the new equipment that is being integrated into the industry.



The primary reason the Rutgers Turf Club made the trip to San Antonio, Texas was to compete in the Student Challenge. On Friday morning of January 24, we walked our two teams of four, ready to compete against the other colleges and universities. We competed against 21 teams and had one team place in 5th; this team consisted of Nicholas Delmar, Kyle Genova, Jianlong (Jason) Sun, and Lorabeth West. Our second team included Elizabeth Holmes, Josh Moehler, Michael Monzón, and Ariane Vasilatis. The scoring was close, but all in all we

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were very pleased with the results, having six out of our eight members being first time attendees. The student challenge is an exam made up of multiple components that include short answer, identification, and multiple-choice aspects. We studied our turfgrasses, weeds, insects, diseases, all chemical components, soils, and equipment parts. The Turf Club is eager to attend the STMA conference in 2015 in Denver, Colorado to compete in Rutgers honor.

Once again, we would like to thank Rutgers University, SFMANJ, STMA, and Rutgers Turf Club for enabling us to attend. We also would like to thank our advisors, Brad Park, Sabrina Tirpak, Dr. Bruce Clarke, and Charles Schmid, without them we never would have made it. It is an honor to represent the turfgrass program at Rutgers University, as well as work besides some of the most knowledgeable people in the industry. Our appreciation is endless for these opportunities. Thank you for your support!

*Lorabeth West is an undergraduate student at Rutgers University and a 2014 STMA student challenge team member representing Rutgers University*



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