FS-008 - Legendary Chicago Sports Fields: Behind the Scenes of Safe, Sustainable, and Beautiful

Friday, November 06
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Room: Gate 33, Level 2

Wrigley, Soldier, Toyota Park, & Northwestern: Get inside, behind the scenes & meet the pros who keep them safe, sustainable & beautiful!

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend the day exploring the infrastructure of Chicago’s iconic sports venues, including Wrigley Field, Soldier Field, Toyota Park, and Northwestern Fields. Ask the professional turf managers in person how they maintain these famous facilities to keep them safe and healthy throughout the season, with sustainable practices.

Learning Objectives include, but not limited to:

- Understand the challenges involved with maintaining & managing a safe playing surface while hosting other types of events such as concerts, outdoor hockey games, etc.
- Learn what it really takes to grow and maintain gorgeous turf throughout the long, grueling season- the resources that are needed and why they are so critical.
- Raise your awareness of the synthetic turf surfaces that have become commonplace in many school and park districts’ facilities. Learn what resources and equipment are required to keep them safe.

Understand the technical challenges and the environmental pressures placed on sportsturf managers to conserve resources and water while maintaining aesthetically pleasing and safe fields.
**Wrigley Field:**
Head Sports Field Manager: Justin Spillman, and Roger Baird

Wrigley Field, which was built in 1914, will be playing host to Major League Baseball for the 100th season in 2014 - and to the Cubs for the 98th year. Wrigley Field is the second-oldest ballpark in the majors behind Boston’s Fenway Park (1912).

**There was a bear on the field**

Chicago Cubs baseball player George Pierce petting a bear cub at Weeghman Park in Chicago, later to be named Wrigley Field, Aug. 25, 1916. Joa, a live cub, greeted fans at the first National League game at the stadium in 1916. Local zookeeper Cy Devry led Joa around the park and even to home plate for photographers.

**Northwestern University:**
Head Sports Turf Manager: Scott Arey, and Carrie Forsman

Ryan Field is a stadium in Evanston, Illinois, United States on the campus of Northwestern University. It is primarily used for American football, and is the home field of the Northwestern Wildcats football team. The field opened in 1926 and holds 47,130 people. Prior to 1997, the stadium was named Dyche Stadium, for William Dyche, Class of 1882, former Evanston mayor and overseer of the building project. In 1997, the field was renamed Ryan Field in honor of the family of Patrick G. Ryan, who was then the chairman of Northwestern’s board of trustees. We will be viewing the Hunter ST System on the new synthetic field hockey playing area.
Soldier Field:
Head Sports Turf Manager: Ken Mrock, and John Nolan

Soldier Field has hosted rock concerts, thrill shows, rodeos, tractor and truck pulls, circuses, fireworks displays, stock car races, sunrise services, marching band concerts, open-air operas, skiing and toboggan events including a ski jump event from a 13-story platform.

The stadium’s underpinnings consist of 10,000 giant wood piling foundations driven an average depth of six stories through landfill to bedrock.

It hosted the first boxing event that drew a gate of over $2.5 million (Dempsey-Tunney, 1927), the first ski meet held in a stadium, and the all-time largest football crowd (123,000). The largest crowd for any event in Soldier Field was 260,000 on Sept. 8, 1954, for the religious Marian Year Tribute.

Toyota Park:
Head Sports Turf Manager: Joel White

TOYOTA PARK is the heart of soccer for much of the Midwest and a must-see destination for world-class concerts and other sporting events. Each year, more than a half million people go by the stadium’s trademark brick arch, many achieving or reliving what has become a rite of passage for sports and music fans alike. A practice facility with two fields (one natural grass, one artificial turf) for the Fire club and its youth programs is adjacent to the stadium. The stadium’s design is expandable to 30,000 seats without great cost for future growth. The natural grass stadium field includes a $1.7 million turf management system including full heating, drainage, and aeration capabilities.
Field Session Co-Leaders:

Eric Simmons, PLA, ASLA
Field Session Leader
eric.simmons@hunterindustries.com
Eric Simmons, PLA, ASLA manages specification sales throughout the Midwest for Hunter and has represented the manufacturer now for 8 years. Eric is a graduate of the University of Illinois with a degree in landscape architecture—licensed in IL. Mr. Simmons background includes years spent on the design side of the field as well as the installation, construction and project management side of the industry. For the last 12 years of his career, Eric has worked in sales for a large-scale landscape distribution company then on to Hunter, a global leader manufacturing landscape irrigation and lighting products.

Lynda Wightman, ASLA; IA; IF; NIAAA; ASIC; IMASLA; STMA; AWE; AEF; PLANET
Field Session Presenter
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Lynda Wightman has worked for Hunter Industries (irrigation equipment manufacturer) since 1984. During the 30 years, she has held positions in sales, education and training. Lynda is currently Hunter’s Industry Relations’ Manager, assisting with the company’s specification efforts worldwide; education opportunities; allied association representation (strength being focused on water conservation and sustainable landscapes, specification and sports turf). Her education background is in Ornamental Horticulture, Landscaping and Irrigation. She is involved in various industry associations including ASIC, STMA, NALP, ASLA, Irrigation Foundation, IA, NIAAA, NRPA, ASBA, EEBA and many regional chapters of these associations. Lynda lives in Missoula, MT and enjoys teaching others about efficient irrigation practices.

References for Sports Turf Management/Managers:

www.stma.org (Sports Turf Manager’s Association)
www.sportsbuilders.org (American Sports Builder’s Association)