Winter kill serves spring wake-up call to mid-Atlantic Coast supremes

By DIANE MILLER

In the wake of the most severe winter since 1977-78, golf course superintendents from Maryland to New York are reporting the loss of as much as 30 percent of their turf on greens and up to 70 percent on fairways, and some may not open until "well into May."

The blanket of ice and snow that kept many courses closed for as long as two to three months prevents gas exchange around the glass plants, in effect smothering the plant. Superintendents are discovering that under the layers of ice the turf is rotting and black in some areas, giving off a powerful stench once the ice is removed.

Winter injury, including extensive winter kill of poa annua and perennial ryegrass, extends from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., through the Philadelphia area, central and northern New Jersey, and into the Pocono Mountains, according to the U.S. Golf Association Green Section. Much heavier than normal snow mold damage is being reported through Ohio and Kentucky.

More than 200 golf course superintendents, assistants, greens chairmen, club officials, and course owners from the New Jersey/Philadelphia area met on March 28 at Tavistock Country Club in Haddonfield, N.J., to discuss the ramifications of the severe damage.

The joint meeting of the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of New Jersey (GCSANJ) and the Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents (PAGCS) opened the line of communication between superintendents, club officials and the USGA.

Jim Sklorsky, Northeast Region agronomist for the USGA, discussed previous years' damage from upstate New York and Montreal. David Oatis, director of the Green Section's Northeast Region, discussed communication with club membership and talked about what superintendents can expect during the winter.

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Fourth-grade students take ‘teacher’ Moore to school

By JIM MOORE

Travel, turf trouble the consultant’s lot

Travelling around the Mid-Continent region, looking at golf courses, trying to figure out what is happening where, the endless waiting of Turfgrass Advisory Service (TAS) reports, and way too many fast-food meals. Running in airports, standing in lines, glaring at the jerks who ignore boarding instructions, getting lost everywhere, and figuring out how to turn the lights on in twenty different rental cars.

On the more serious side, there is worrying about the superintendent and course that are in trouble, wishing you could come up with a magic cure, dealing with the clubs that want more but simply can’t fund the improvements, and the constant balancing act between spending time "on the road" and trying to find more time to spend with the family.

After nine years of dealing with these challenges, I have decided the only means of survival (only 20 years to go) is to

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Judge: Golf balls belong to golfers

Golf balls driven into a lake belong to the original owner, according to a ruling by a judge in Vancouver, Canada.

The decision came in a case prompted by a youth who was retrieving balls from a water hazard. He was accused of stealing the balls, but the judge ruled the balls belong to the golfer, not the course.

Mayfair Lakes Management Corp. maintains a contract with a scuba diving company to recover balls lost in its lake. These balls are valued at more than $10,000 a year.

The course is considering requiring a waiver from golfers, who would relinquish ownership of balls lost in the lake.

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Ashes to ashes, dust to dust at Clark AFB course

By HAL PHILLIPS

Mount Pinatubo fallout

Commentary

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Humor, embarrassment a potent combination, Moore relates

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try to find a little humor in every situation. Nothing makes a bad day a little more bearable than getting someone to laugh with you — or even at you.

I have found that some of the funniest situations are those that make you cringe a little bit whenever you remember them. The combination of embarrassment and humor is a potent one. One of the best I can remember happened to me occurred early in my Green Section career. I had a couple of months on the staff under my belt and was starting to feel like perhaps I could do this job after all.

Brimming with confidence (unlike at the time) I was making a TAS visit on a course in Nebraska. Along for the tour were the green committee, the golf professional, and the superintendent — the usual entourage.

Spoiling an agronomic gem of wisdom after another, I lead the group through the course until we encountered a green with two, dark parallel lines crossing the surface. Having personally applied charcoal to many a hydraulic leak, I immediately diagnosed the injury. The superintendent laughed and the others on the visit frowned. I bent down to get a closer look and suddenly the lines moved just a bit. Power line shadows do that when the wind blows. We all had a great laugh but I will admit I have yet to make another visit to that course. I expect credibility will be the problem.

With this job, like most jobs, about the time you are having a few doubts about your ability, something happens to make you feel maybe you are doing some good after all. I recently traveled to Dallas where one of the fellows on the visit felt the sand in the bunkers was bad because the ball would not hold the green when blasted out. Those of you familiar with my writing might remember I tend not to have a lot of sympathy with player complaints concerning the sand in the bunkers since they are, after all, a hazard.

However, this fellow was adamant that a requirement of bunker sand should be to allow players to impart backspin on the ball. To demonstrate this failing in the existing bunkers, he dropped a couple of balls and tried to blast out. After shanking the first three shots and nearly hitting one of the fellows on our group about 90 degrees off line, I gave up and tried to remind everyone I was there as an agronomist — not a player. Big cringe.

Playing skill, as it relates to the agronomic condition of the course, was on a visit to a course in Mexico. The complaint this time was that the greens did not hold an approach shot — even with a wedge. Careful to pick an uphill lie, into the wind, and to a green that looked over watered, I decided once again to prove the complainer wrong by embarrassing him with the fact that even a grass guy can hold the greens.

After shanking the first three shots and nearly hitting one of our group about 90 degrees off line, I gave up and tried to remind everyone I was there as an agronomist — not a player. Big cringe.