**Winter hangover lingers in Midwest**

Crown damage, desiccation rampant

**BY MARK LESLIE**

Superintendents from Minnesota and Michigan to Iowa and Illinois were up against the wall this spring, their courses belted with desiccation, crown damage and direct low-temperature kill that set season openings back weeks.

"Instead of having March, April, May, we're having March, March, March," said Bruce Williams of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). "Harsh winter kill seems endemic from Colorado through Kansas, Iowa and areas like that."

"When we first started greening up in late April — which is very late for us — all the high spots came out green and all the low spots were dead stone-cold dormant," said Dick Stuntz of Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kan., attributing damage to a snow-melt that froze again.

"Guys with ryegrass fairways lost it. For those of us with zoysiagrass, the loss isn't large but it will be a terribly slow recovery."

While Jerry Faubel of Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club was "very fortunate and escaped damage" because he added drainage in key areas last year, the former GCSAA president said: "Courses throughout the Midwest have seen a winter hangover — all the high spots came out green and all the low spots were dead stone-cold dormant.

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**Jacksonville restoration still in limbo**

**BY HALL PHELPS**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — An extremely complicated turf war has developed here concerning property that used to be a golf course, and may be again. Officials at the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) in Tallahassee will decide this month whether the city of Jacksonville will retain funds to restore a golf course on a controversial urban parcel known as Blue Cypress.

Once a privately owned golf facility called University Golf & Country Club, the Blue Cypress land was purchased by the city of Jacksonville in 2000.

Many residents have been fighting to turn the former golf course into a public park, while the developers of the adjacent TPC Sawgrass have been fighting to retain control of the property.

"The property is very late for us to get green," said Richard Simms, president of the FCT. "We're waiting for the city to make a decision on whether to restore the golf course or turn it into a park."
Killed by winter

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Michigan were hit. Not many people lost entire green surfaces. But it [winter kill] is everywhere — most of it in small, isolated areas.

In Iowa, where snowfall wasn't as heavy as other states, uncovered turf suffered from desiccation attributed to high wind and direct low-temperature kill. "From Des Moines west was the hardest hit," said Rick Tegtmeier of Elmercrest Country Club in Cedar Rapids. "They had very little snowfall compared to what we had, and they had strong winds. Plus a lot of them are ryegrass."

All this havoc came on the coattails of a discouraging 1995 in the North Central U.S. Indeed, according to Williams, "Part of the problem is coming back from injury incurred because of the extreme heat in the Chicago area last summer. When we went into winter dormancy, not all the courses had healed completely."

"Desiccation, direct low-temperature kill and crown hydration. We got the triple-whammy," he added. "It's apparent, at least in the Chicago metropolitan area, that damage was directed more toward courses with a higher percentage of poa annua. The newer courses that have USGA [U.S. Golf Association]-spec greens and a higher percentage of bentgrass appear to have fared better."

That holds true in most cases. But there were exceptions, including Iowans Tegtmeier and Dennis Watters of Fort Dodge Country Club. Elmercrest came through the winter unscathed because it sits "very well protected in the heart of the city" and Tegtmeier polycovered his poa annua-dominated greens. And Watters reported his most serious losses on three of his sandier greens as opposed to his native-soil greens.

"It's a guess and a gamble these days, since the ban on mercury," said Jim Nicol of Bunyan Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids, Minn. He said late-March and early-April storms kept snowcover on his course long enough that "the protectantons [on the turf] ran out. My bentgrass was clean and the poa in sandy areas was pretty clean. But poa in wooded areas and in heavy soil got hit hard."

All this damage delayed openings at some courses in the region. And even at courses that did open on time, continued cold and inclement weather caused some devastating financial losses.

"People I know all opened late — the week of April 17, which is 12 days late for us," said Nicol. "Golf overall has been down severely," Faubel said. "We still are covering the links emerging and want to make sure they survive. It gives us about another 10 degrees soil temperature. We're running about 54 degrees soil temperature. We're running over 60 degrees through the winter unscathed. Optimum this time of year is the 62-degree range."

Watters agreed: "We're still in April as far as soil temperature is concerned."

"We're just starting to get 60-degree soil temperatures now," said Nicol from Minnesota. "My growth calendar is about two weeks behind."

Saying that "patience begins to wear thin" when grass-growing conditions are not optimal, Williams warned: "We have to remember that we can't go out and do things that are going to push the grass and force it into something that is going to cause problems down the road, vis a vis over-fertilization — those types of things which will develop top growth with no roots. That will set you up for damage in the summer of '96."

The prognosis for recovery?

"We who deal with it see the brighter side of things," Williams said. "The bad news is, the poa died. The good news is, it's coming back. At this point in time anything green would be acceptable."

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