Rain, Rain Go Away!

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So much for drought that was predicted for the northern Midwest. By mid-July, many golf courses have already experienced twice the average rainfall for the entire season. The rain has come in manageable ½-inch to 1-inch increments for the fortunate few. Others have been deluged with multiple 3-inch to 5-inch cloudbursts, which often occurred within a 24-hour period.

Frequent, heavy rainfall affects the playing surfaces in a variety of ways. Sand-based greens and tees frequently appear chlorotic as nutrients are pushed below the reach of shallow roots. Root dieback has been a common concern where the upper soil profile has been waterlogged for extended periods of time. Poa annua playing surfaces seem to have suffered the most. The hot, rainy weather promotes disease activity and wet wilt. Poa annua greens have see-sawed between soggy and wilt conditions within a matter of hours.

Don’t be afraid to pull out the spiker and/or aerator to address these problems. Quadratine aeration has already helped many golf course superintendents dry out mushy greens and promote a healthier balance of air and moisture in the root zone. A spiking operation every Monday morning can work wonders.

Weak, shallow-rooted turf needs to be irrigated carefully. Forget about deep, infrequent irrigation cycles on Poa annua greens until soil temperatures moderate and the root systems regenerate. Rely more on judicious hand-watering and less on the automatic irrigation system.

Well, at least the roughs look great.

What will be the end result of the soggy summer...stay tuned for the next update.