

# Weather Affects Everyone Daily

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Weather. The constant factor that affects everyone daily, but the one which we have no control over. For most people, weather is tolerated or enjoyed. For those of us in the turf business, weather may have a dramatic affect on our lives. Much of the successes that we enjoy as golf course superintendents are directly related to our abilities to cope with and deal with the weather and all the ways that weather affect our courses. For me, weather can be more a mental challenge than physical. I firmly believe that being a turf manager is more mental than physical and having the ability to mentally cope is essential. How we are able to deal with the challenges of weather will ultimately determine if we as turf managers are successful or not. Being in Asia has made me more aware of how we as turf managers are truly affected by weather and how our abilities to cope with weather and its many aspects directly affects our short term and long term successes and failures.

**Growing up and working in the Midwest**, I was used to,

comfortable with and enjoyed the four distinctive seasons that were part of the climate. Spring, summer, fall and winter were for the most part very different, distinctive and enjoyable. I always looked forward to each special time of the year and the ensuing season with both its positive and negatives, usually many more pluses than minuses. I personally never had a favorite season or time of the year, although as I grew older, the attraction of winter lessened year after year. Snow, wind chills of minus 20 degrees or more seemed to lose their attractiveness as each year passed me by. The exhilarations and beauty of the dawn of a new day on the golf course covered by a new coat of white seemed to lessen and paled in comparison to the daily influences of the cold and all that the cold affected, be it both on the golf course and in our personal lives. Even though winter was a respite from the hustle and bustle of the golf season, the uncertainty of what spring would reveal was always there. A relaxed, comfortable winter could be quickly turned into a season of anxiety with one winter thaw and rainstorm – especially when dealing with poa annua. Each season provided distinctive challenges and opportunities; personal and mental highs and lows. One can experience a wide range of conditions and exhilarations; from the clear, crispiness of an early January morning to the hot, humid dog days of August. The beauty of the golf course landscape after a fresh blanket of snow. The beauty of a freshly groomed cross-country ski trail. The special greenness of the grass on the golf course in early spring. That special fragrance of freshly mowed turf. The beauty of a fall morning with the various species of trees dressed in their respective colorful canopies. The beauty and adventure of the afternoon skies turning dark as the precursor to that summer thunderstorm, lightning dancing across the skies and the freshness of the air after the thunderstorm has passed by. Every season on the golf course has always provided me with a uniqueness and appreciation of how the seasons and weather truly affected my chosen path in life. A daily companion as much as life itself.

**Working and living in Asia** and more specifically, Hong Kong, has provided a new perspective on weather and how it truly affects the golf course and myself personally. In Hong Kong we do experience the four seasons, but not to the extremes of the Midwest. Spring encompasses the months of February through mid-June, with the daytime highs in the 60s and 70s, and the lows in the upper 40s and 50s. The summer season is from about June 15th through early September. Summer temperatures generally are in the 80s and 90s, with relative humidity of 80% or higher. In mid-summer it is not uncommon to have temperatures of low 90s and humidity's in the 90% range at 5 am. June through August also is the rainy season. In 2006 we received over 30 inches of rainfall in each month of June, July and August. Needless to say, irrigation is not a concern for most of the summer! Initially

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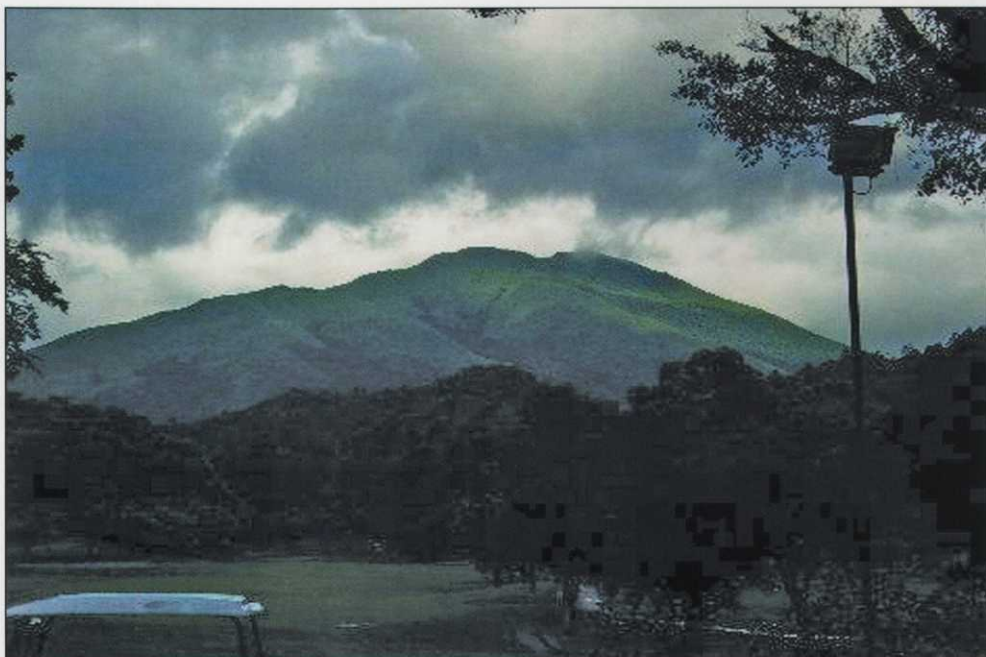
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summer! Initially I anticipated the heat and humidity of summer would be a problem for me personally and physically. Over the years I had come to dread the heat and humidity of July that invariably would occur and the stresses that occur with dealing with poa. Surprisingly, the heat and humidity never presented a real problem physically. I've theorized that being in a relatively warm climate, mentally and physically I slowly adapted to the warming of the weather and the increasing humidity as summer approached. Days with temperatures and relative humidity's in the 90s never really seemed to be too bad or unbearable. The large amounts of rainfall were more of a concern than the heat and humidity. A major rain event could last for three days and douse the courses with 10 inches of rainfall. We can go through periods where we will receive rainfall every day for a week or more. The Chinese are so use to



these conditions that rainfall is just a fact and way of life. Everyone puts on raingear and just keeps on working as if it was a clear day. Watching the staff just continuing to go about their business was

amazing. The only time that the staff or golfer seeks shelter is in case of lightning. The club has a lightning detection system that is monitored by the security staff.

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When lightning is approaching, a siren is activated and everyone clears the golf courses until the threat of lightning passes. Then it's back to work and golf once again. Golfers will continue to play as long as the courses are open. All three courses are so well drained that seldom is a course closed due to rainfall. A course closure will occur only until the excessive rainfall drains off. Then it's back to playing golf. A result of the excessive rainfall is that good agronomic programs are essential for turf and golfcourse survival. Constant needling of greens is extremely important in maintaining adequate air to the root system and for surface drainage. The greens' surfaces have a tendency to seal off with the abundant rainfall. Surprisingly, with adequate nutrient levels, especially Ca, disease problems are not a major concern. Chlorothalonil applications on a 10 to 14 day schedule are usually sufficient for dis-



ease prevention and control. The incorporation of phosphites into our agronomic program has been an important tool to aid in the prevention and control of pythium.

Amazingly, one morning in early September one will walk out of the house to experience a cool breeze and a refreshing early morning temperature. That is the signal that fall is beginning. September through mid-November is marked by comfortable daytime highs in the 70s and nighttime lows in the 50s and 60s. Along

with comfortable temperatures, the rainfall stops. Two to three weeks without rainfall is quite normal during the fall and winter seasons. Winter is from late November through late February, and is very comfortable. Daytime highs range into the 60s and 70s and nighttime lows in the 30s and 40s. Last year between Christmas and New Years there was frost on the turf in the early morning hours. Frost, but no snow. Definitely not conditions conducive for winter sports activities but no need for a shovel either.

**Did I miss the snow?** Not really. Not as much as I initially expected. Being dressed in golf slacks and a golf shirt definitely was better than dealing with shoveling snow and below zero temperatures. A few frosty mornings were enough winter for me. But alas, I did not miss winter and snow entirely. Upon my return to the States in early April for a vacation, I was greeted by temperatures in the 30s and snow. Typical Wisconsin weather in early spring.

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