

The Calendar Says GO, But The Weather Says WHOA!

By Derf Soller, agronomist, West Region

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In travels to golf courses the past few weeks in CO, WY, MT, and UT, it has been déjà vu all over again! Continuing cold, not just cool temperatures, have stalled winter recovery at almost every facility. The calendars at most courses are all the same -- large group outings are the norm, as are the spring kick-off events for many women's and men's associations. The problem is that the current conditions have not allowed golf course superintendents to enjoy all the hard work they have put into the golf course this spring. Most courses have completed their spring aerations of the golf course, but it is the greens that golfers are watching most closely. Greens have been successfully core aerated, cleaned up, topdressed, overseeded, and fertilized. It has been a testing time for maintenance crews as they 'hurry up and wait' for growth to begin.



Just because the calendar in the pro shop says its league time, and greens are expected to be rolling 11 feet with the Stimpmeter, it does not mean that all systems are a go. Grass will grow when it is time. Generally, soil temperatures need to be in the mid 50's for either turf growth to begin, or seedlings to germinate. Without these temperatures, all the work performed on the course to-date will just not allow recovery. At visits the past few weeks, soil temperatures are barely reaching low 50's, with most still in the 40's and 30's! And it is mid- May!

By all means, get out and play golf (if you can), and you will almost be able to watch the course start to grow.

Heads up, and don't become a victim:

Two Denver-area golf courses experienced the down side of having only minimal security at the maintenance shops and pro shops. In the early weeks of November, these 2 maintenance facilities were broken in and burglarized. Since that time, another 10 have had break-ins. The superintendents and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Departments are working together to look for common threads in the break-ins. Watch for unknown individuals coming to the shop, looking around while "waiting to speak to someone", especially when most of the personnel are out working on the course. Power has been cut to buildings, rendering alarms or video cameras useless. Without sending panic to golf courses around the country, it may be a good time to re-evaluate your security systems and make all staff aware of the potential. Items taken from maintenance facilities include computers, (yes, irrigation centrals' included) mechanic tools if boxes are not locked, chain saws and other small power tools, and even the golf clubs in the superintendent's office!

While officials do not know who or how many individuals are responsible for these break-ins, it is prudent to be cautious and not leave your facility 'unmanned' for long periods of time

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