

EDITORIAL

THE MYSTERIOUS WINTER OF '77

It is obvious that what many Superintendents thought was going to be a good spring for our greens turned out to be a disaster for many of us. Over the past several weeks I've discussed the situation of Poa winter kill with several Superintendents and after visual inspection I have come up with the following conclusions.

First of all and most noticeable is the fact that those who aerified their greens this past fall had the most damage. Especially, where the aerification holes were not closed up. Those who aerified immediately after Labor Day with smaller tines, then topdressed, fertilized and left their greens a little hairy going into the winter didn't seem to suffer as badly. The courses with no fall aerification on greens came out the best. Poa greens that were on sand topdressing programs fared the worst. Traffic areas on and off sections of a particular green also seemed hit worse. Courses with more play than others seemed to have more problems. Greens in hard to grow areas, with little air movement and heavy traffic were damaged more than others.

Upon taking over at Skokie in mid-January one of the first observations I undertook was to shovel snow off of some greens to check for an ice layer. Indeed that is exactly what I found, a very thin coat on many greens and not only in low lying areas.

Synopsis:

The summer of 77 was a bad one probably one of the worst. With all of the heat and rain in mid-summer to many of us the only re-course was to aerify greens in the fall. The poa was weak, those that utilized a sand topdressing program where fall poa germination is limited had many weakened plants going into the winter. Green areas where traffic is heaviest also had restricted roots unable to withstand the ice immediately under the surface level. Those who aerified and didn't have the holes close up as fast as anticipated suffered when the greens became saturated with rains in late fall followed by heavy wet snows which froze in the unfrosted aerification holes. Some of us who probably made the last cut on greens a little too late especially on small heavily trafficked greens also suffered. Maybe we learned a lesson from this past winter. Our business is like a card game, sometimes we have to make the "wrong move" at the right time!

John Berarducci
Skokie Country Club

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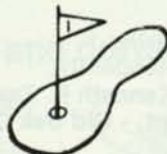
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