

Horace Heat and Herman Humidity: Then, and Now

The way we are is often foreshadowed by the way we were. In On Course, we've launched "The Way We Are" to run intermittently with "The Way We Were." This special edition of "The Way We Were" comes from past president of the MAGCS and GCSAA Bob Williams, who shares a personal letter and the yellowed newspaper clipping that accompanied it. The letter is on Minikahda Club (Minneapolis, MN) stationery and reads as follows:

April 3, 2002

Dear Mr. Williams:

Greetings from Minnesota. I hope that your weather in the Chicago area is treating you better than the weather here in Minnesota. We just received 7" of snow on April 1-2.

I am the superintendent at The Minikahda Club in Minneapolis. I have just taken over the position here this past March. As most new superintendents probably do, I have been trying to clean and organize the facilities to my liking. We have this one filing cabinet that has many, many old files and documents in it. Some of these files date back to 1949. As I was sorting through the files from 1955, I found this article. One of the members at the time had apparently read the article and passed it on to the acting grounds committee chairman.

After seeing your name in the article, I thought that you should have it. I really like the small section in the upper-right-hand corner that talks about Horace Heat and Herman Humidity. I wish I knew what newspaper the article came from. After reading the article, it is apparent that some things never change and yet we have come a long ways since you gentlemen were in charge.

I would like to thank you for all that you and others like you have done for our industry. You were leaders and innovators; back when the universities had done so little research, you, the superintendents, were leading the way. Enjoy the article.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey Johnson
Superintendent

The article in question, by a certain legendary reporter named Charles Bartlett, appears below.

Horace-Herman—Golf's Most Gruesome Twosome

"Well, that's it," agreed Ray Gerber, Bob Williams, and Gordon Brinkworth as they finished posting the bulletin at right on all courses in the Chicago golf area. "Maybe we've just had it for this season. Maybe they have made a clean getaway. But you never know, with the Septembers that sometimes hit us. All we can do is mend our fences and start building for next season. Let's hope it's nothing like this consarned one. Worst ever in these parts for golf courses. Hit us a lot harder than '47 and '53, and they were rough!"

Gerber, Williams, and Brinkman, three golfers with green thumbs, are leaders of the posse that has spent the last five weeks running down Heat, Humidity, Pythium, Crabgrass, et.al. Never before in the history of their worthy and too-often unsung lodge—the Midwest Golf Course Superintendents Association—have they met such a swift and devastating attack by the aforesaid golf course criminals.

Pythium and Crabgrass Get in Their Dirty Work

It all happened in the span between July 25 and August 29. Within that stretch, Chicago golfers, a huge majority of them private club members, have found their courses ravaged almost overnight. Pythium and Crabgrass were the chief offenders, concentrating their onslaughts on fairways and roughs. Pythium is a surface fungus growth, colonizing in a cottony mold among the webs of dew. Crabgrass? Just a bad boy liable to run wild in golf grass at any time, but especially in hot, humid weather.

"The heat and humidity set up the whole epidemic," allowed Gerber, now celebrating his 20th year as Glen Oak's course superintendent. "Gordon and Bob and I made a tour of seven north side courses—Glen View, North Shore, Sunset Ridge, Northmoor, Westmoreland, Bob O'Link, and Park Ridge—on Monday, July 25. Everything seemed O.K. that day. Next day, trouble busted out all over the district and kept on going until that big overnight rain we had on Monday, August 29."

Was It Hot! Temperature in July Averaged Cool 91.5

"Know what the average maximum daily temperature for July was?" interrupted Beverly Country Club's Williams, one of the most astute greens men in the game. "It was 91.5 degrees, and the humidity darn near matched it! Nineteen July days of 90 or more set a weather bureau record for a single month. The 24-hour July average [day-and-night] of 81.3 was another new high for the 84-year bureau's book. Soil temperature at a depth of four inches was 86 degrees during this session!"

"It was a real fight during that spell," said Brinkworth, who is leaving Brookwood after three years to become Olympia Fields' new course superintendent. "All of us on the west side were hurt when Salt Creek dried up. Clubs like Brookwood, Elmhurst, Itasca, Elmhurst and Nordic Hills, Medinah, with its Lake Kadajah, escaped this beating to some extent. Then the pumps broke down at Beverly and Brookwood. I was out with my watering crews as late as 1 a.m. And Ray here even syringed [hand-

watered] his Glen Oak greens in the middle of some of those days to protect them."

Effects of 1955 Won't Be Erased Until May 30, 1956

"What's the future of these Chicago district courses?" Elmer Dubb, the noted week-end hacker, asked. "Have you guys got the situation in control, after this whipping you've taken?"

"Well, son, we'll tell you—," chorused Gerber, Williams, and Brinkworth.

1. Courses are gradually regaining health, thanks to the recent pleasant weather. You can't beat City Hall nor Mother Nature. Course superintendents must follow, thru mid-September, regular renovating procedures of aeration, seeding, and fertilizing.
2. It is agreed among members of the Midwest G.C.S.A. that the effects of this season's 35-day punishment will not be completely erased until next Memorial Day.
3. New seeding presents biggest problem of all. Seeded bents like Seaside, Astoria, and Colonial are at a premium, having been grabbed up in the recent panic.
4. Around-the-clock vigilance by superintendents must continue to avert another attack of hot weather similar to 1953, when excessive temperatures prevailed almost thru the month of September.
5. The loss in this disastrous July-August spell has not been in dollars and cents, but in the patience of members and course employees. Unthinking members who are too quick to criticize an unavoidable condition like the current one forget the \$100,000 that is spent annually on turf research. Fruits of that painstaking fight against golf grass diseases may not be evident for another 25 years. As a speaker at last winter's national convention of golf course superintendents said:

"Why are golfers down on things they're not up on?"

REWARD!

FOR ARREST AND CONVICTION OF THE FOLLOWING GOLF COURSE ENEMIES:

HORACE HEAT and **HERMAN HUMIDITY**, first cousins, sought in wholesale robbery of greens and fairways and tees in Chicago district for period between July 25 and August 29, 1955.

PERCY PYTHIUM, confidence man wanted for defrauding all golf grasses in this area during said period.

DENNIS DOLLAR SPOT, can be recognized by freckled fairway grasses resembling measles spots.

BIG BROWN PATCH, known for the wide, smoky circles he leaves after raids.

ALGERNON ALGAE, does his worst under conditions of too much moisture, like overwatering or excessive rains on poorly irrigated courses.

CLARENCE CRABGRASS, notorious bully and contributor to delinquency of all young golf grasses.

If you have information leading to apprehension and conviction of above dangerous characters, contact soonest Midwest Golf Course Superintendents association.