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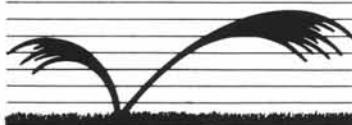
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## Poa — July 13, 1995

by Cathy Miles Ralston

No doubt about it: the summer of '95 will be remembered as a series of scorching, humid days and warm, muggy nights.

Extreme conditions call for extreme coping measures. Like superintendents area-wide, Dan Dinelli of Glenview's North Shore Country Club has been struggling not only to keep the golf course green, but also in the case of certain greens to keep the turf alive!

Lush and venerable North Shore C.C. was built in 1920s, which has given the renegade weed *poa annua* (annual bluegrass) ample opportunity to infiltrate the course's putting surfaces. As those in the golf industry know all too well, *Poa annua* is opportunistic; whenever a ball mark, divot or spike mark injures the existing turf — creeping bentgrass, in the case of North Shore's greens — *poa* swoops in. Dan estimates that many of North Shore's greens are 50 percent *poa annua*. A few of the oldest greens, which haven't been regrassed in more than 70 years, may be as much as 90 percent infested with *poa*.

Herein lies the problem, the quandary that afflicts public courses and private clubs, older, established venues and new facilities alike. *Poa annua* is a viable playing surface; a plant pathologist, writing in *Weeds Trees & Turf*, observed that "under close cut, irrigated turfgrass cultural conditions, it is capable of forming a dense, uniform quality of turf." Indeed, most golfers can't distinguish between *poa annua* and creeping bent — both cool season turfgrasses — unless variances (in coloration, texture, etc.) are pointed out to them. So what, golfers may ask, is the harm in letting *poa annua* prevail?

The answer: *poa annua* is extremely vulnerable to heat, much more so than creeping bent. When soil temperatures reach 104 degrees, annual bluegrass dies. The dose-time principle applies here; as Dan explains, it's not only the magnitude of the heat, but "how hot for how long". Humidity exacerbates the heat factor, inhibiting transpiration, the mechanism by which plants cool themselves. Additional stressors inflicted upon golf course turfgrasses, such as foot traffic, low cutting heights and impaired air movement over grassy surfaces, further exploit *Poa annua*'s inherent vulnerability.

July 13, the pinnacle of the summer's most brutal heat wave, compelled Chicagoland meteorologists to rewrite the record books. Air temperatures soared as high as 106 degrees; the heat index hovered in the 120s. Statistics generated by the weather station at North Shore — one of only two golf courses in the area with this technology — are equally impressive and, given *Poa annua*'s prevalence and susceptibility to heat, downright scary. The following is an excerpt from the data



(continued page 15)

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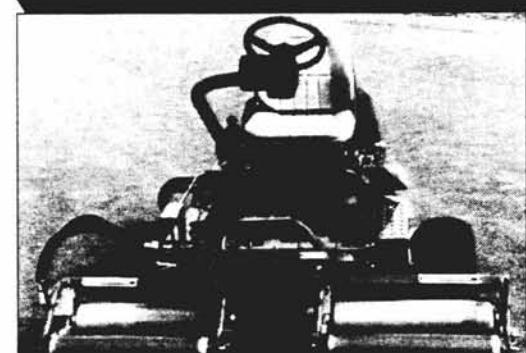
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Dan Dinelli, Superintendent Grounds,  
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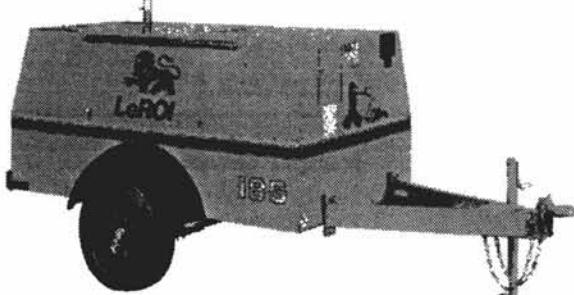
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(Poa — July 13, 1995 continued)

gathered July 13. Note that the weather station calculates air temperature at six inches above the turf; soil temperatures come from a probe buried two inches below the surface of #4 green.

Time	Air Temp	Soil Temp
11:36 am	96.31	97.02
12:36 pm	98.44	99.86
1:12 pm	99.86	100.58
1:36 pm	100.58	101.28
2:12 pm	101.28	101.98
2:48 pm	102.34	102.34
3:00 pm	102.34	103.06!!!
3:12 pm	103.06	103.06
3:48 pm	102.34	102.34
4:12 pm	102.34	101.64
4:48 pm	101.64	100.92
5:36 pm	98.08	100.22
6:00 pm	96.31	99.16

As the table indicates, soil temperatures peaked at 103.06, #4 green experienced four and a half hours with soil temps over 100 degrees. Dan hypothesizes that conditions on #7, #17 and #18 greens were even more devastating. These greens face east down open fairways and soak up hours of direct morning sunlight. Aesthetically pleasing but functionally detrimental stands of mature trees frame the greens at issue, buffering them from summer's predominant south to southwest breezes, thereby creating a "dead air" phenomenon.

Dan explains that most of the destruction wrought by this summer's excruciating heat is not visible to golfers. If the greens at North Shore C.C., or at any given golf course in Chicagoland, appear healthy, if not somewhat parched or stressed, consider it illusory. Poa annua's root complex is the most telling piece of the puzzle. When soil temperatures climb as high as they have this summer, poa annua's roots die back. The few remaining roots scarcely penetrate the surface soil. Obviously, the plants lose access to vital stores of moisture. Over-irrigating turf is no solution; excess water conducts heat and fosters disease. At North Shore, Dan has instituted a regimen of watering little (in terms of sheer volume) and often. His other guiding principles for care of poa annua-infused greens:

- Forego grooming. Normally his crews groom every time they mow.
- Skip double-cutting and roll instead.
- Mow clean-up pass only every other time, to avoid wear at the fringe.
- Use lighter mowers.
- Raise cutting height (North Shore went from .125 to 130).
- Install generator-powered fans at perimeter of greens lacking air movement and shade.
- Verti-drain particularly vulnerable greens.
- Trim back overgrown foliage that fosters "dead air" pockets.

(continued bottom page 18)

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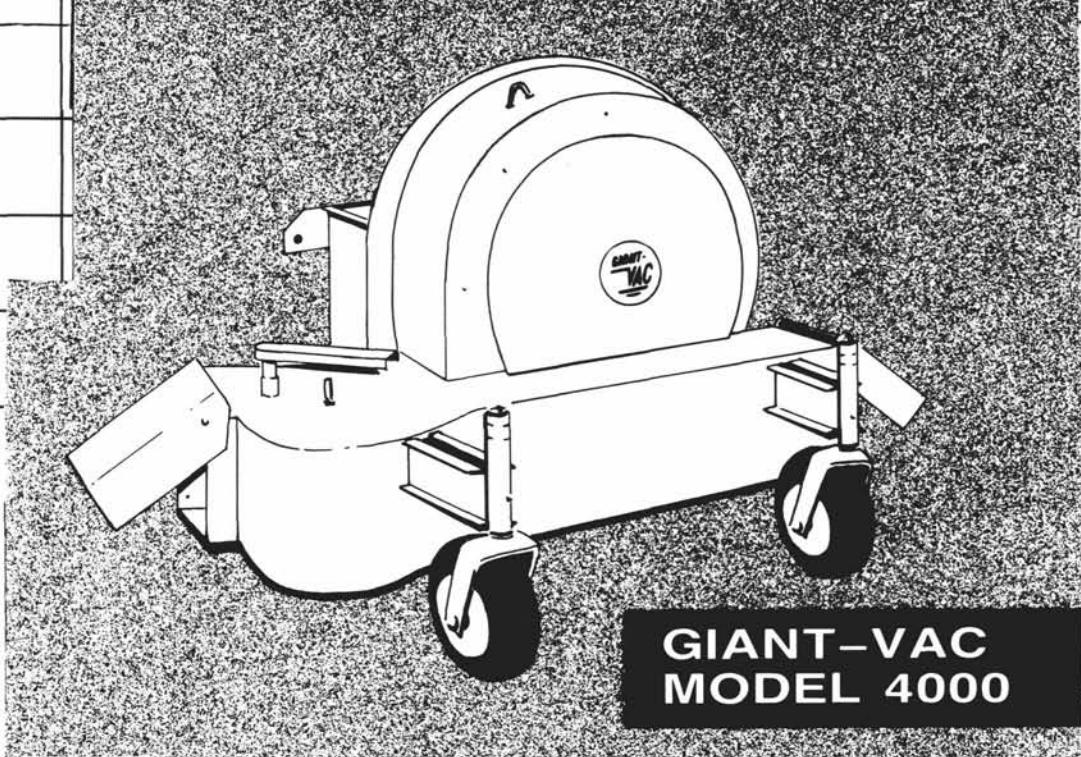
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## **Upcoming Events — Mark Your Calendar**

**September 25** — MAGCS meeting at Prairie Landing G.C.

**October 12** — MAGCS meeting at Sportsman G.C.

**October 14** — MAGCS Fall Dinner Dance at Aurora C.C.

**October 16** — Northern Illinois Golf Day at Midlothian & Beverly C.C.

**November 9** MAGCS Clinic & Annual meeting at Medinah C.C.

**November 27-29** — NCTE at Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, IL

**February 5-11, 1996** — GCSAA 67th Conference & Show, Orlando, FL

Mike Vukmir at Maple Meadows will be starting 9 new holes this coming month. Maple Meadows, a DuPage Forest Preserve golf course are remodeling their courses. They plan to redo most of the course over the next few years.

Art Benson has decided to hang it up. Art will be retiring on September 28, 1995. He has worked at Butterfield C.C. for 31 years. Art will be retained as the consultant for the 1996 season. Mike Vercautren, the assistant to Art for the past few years will take over as the Superintendent. Congratulations Mike on your new position.

Don Altman at Forest Hills in Rockford reports that he will be rebuilding the 15th & 16th tees this fall. Don also plans to seed some rough areas into wild flowers.

Ed Fischer of Old Elm will be building 8 forward tees this fall. The average tee size will be about 1500 square feet.

Tony Rzadzki sends his new phone number for all of his friends to call: 414/367-9953.

**For Sale:** Toro GM3, "used but not abused". Call Mel or Mike at Inverness G.C., 708/358-7030.

**For Sale:** A chemical spray business has been sold and miscellaneous sprayer, hoses, electric reels, poly tanks, pumps, meters, fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, Steiner 4 wheel drive 20 hp tractor with Dedoes aerifier attached; 2 Jacobsen slitseeders; portable secondary containment units. All must go! Best offer buys. Call 708/744-6710.

Dave Behrman of Riverside G.C. on August 9th had reconstructive surgery done to correct a sleep apnea condition. Dave has a story to tell about this problem, give him a call.

Dave Behrman will be rebuilding his multi-level practice tee this fall into one level and converting it to all bent.

**Kane County Cougars Outing:** Despite several no-shows, 100 people turned out for the annual outing on Saturday, August 5th. Good food, plenty of beer and a Cougar shutout were enjoyed by all. All of the kids in the crowd were treated to games (now people other than his wife Sue have seen Ed Braunsky wrapped in toilet paper), prizes and more candy than their pockets could hold. Accurate Tank Testing and Chicago Turf Irrigation sponsored the event.

Congratulations to Mike Vilendrer on being named Superintendent of White Mountain Golf club in Tinley Park. (which follows with another of those lovely mid-season job openings)

Fred Behnke at the Mt. Prospect Golf Club is looking for an Assistant Superintendent. This position is full-time salaried, with an outstanding benefit package. Call Fred at (708) 632-9331 or mail your resume to Mt. Prospect Park District, 411 S. Maple St., Mt. Prospect, IL 60056.

Mark Felton has joined Huber Ranch Sod Nursery, Inc. as a sales representative for the Chicago and northwest Indiana region. Mark has had 20 years experience in golf course construction, maintenance and operations. He has been involved in golf courses from Texas to Pennsylvania, Florida and Indiana. He has held positions with the PGA Tour in Florida and most recently at Sand Creek Country Club in Chesterton, Indiana.

## **Thank You Sponsors**

Have you hugged a monthly meeting sponsor lately? Sponsorship at our meetings is up over 50% this year, making the golf more affordable for everyone. For about \$50, a golfer at a MAGCS meeting is treated to two meals, a great round of golf, a short educational program and has a pretty fair chance of walking away with a prize. That's a good deal any way you look at it. As it stands now, these are the good people who deserve a thank you.

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(continued page 18)

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**July 9 Steeple Chase G.C.**

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Midwest Breezes continued on page 32

(Poa — July 13 continued)

Ultimately, of course, Dan prefers a permanent solution: regrass greens with more viable creeping bent. Subsequent to the July 13 crisis, notes Dan, "the Poa annua lost its roots, but the bent still had roots to the bottom of the cups." Science corroborates Dan's anecdotal evidence. "At higher soil temperatures (75 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit) creeping bentgrass has a distinct competitive advantage over annual bluegrass" is the consensus among plant pathologists.

While regrassing is expensive in the short term, in the long term Dan believes bentgrass greens are more cost-effective. "Keeping Poa annua alive in summers like this isn't much fun and it is costly", says Dan. "We feel confident that good golfers will like putting on the new upright bents and we will enjoy managing the bent."

Sounds like a win-win situation, which is more than can be said about how Poa annua stacked up to creeping bent during the steamy summer of '95.

**Team Wins Local Golf Tournament Qualifies for International Funds**

The La Grange Country Club team, La Grange, IL, recently won the John Deere local golf tournament held July 24, 1995 at the Orchard Valley Golf Club, Aurora, IL. The tournament was sponsored by John Deere Golf and Turf Products distributor J.W. Turf, Inc. with locations in Hampshire, IL and Pewaukee, WI.

The La Grange Country Club team, one of 43 teams competing, qualifies for a spot in the ninth annual John Deere Team Championship Golf Tournament, to be held at the Wild Wing Plantation, in Myrtle Beach, SC, October 26-28, 1995.

Members of the La Grange Country Club team are Victor Whipp, PGA Professional; Robert Kronn, Club Superintendent; Robert Nelson, Club Manager; and Richard Crain, Club President.

Teams from across the United States and Canada, winners of their respective John Deere local golf tournaments, advance to the tournament finals. The winning team will be joined for the tournament finals by a representative from J.W. Turf, Inc., the John Deere Golf and Turf Products distributor who sponsored the local tournament.

John Deere contributes \$20 to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Foundation (formerly GCSAA Scholarship & Research) for each of the teams competing at the local tournament. John Deere has contributed nearly \$100,000 since the tournament's inception in 1987.

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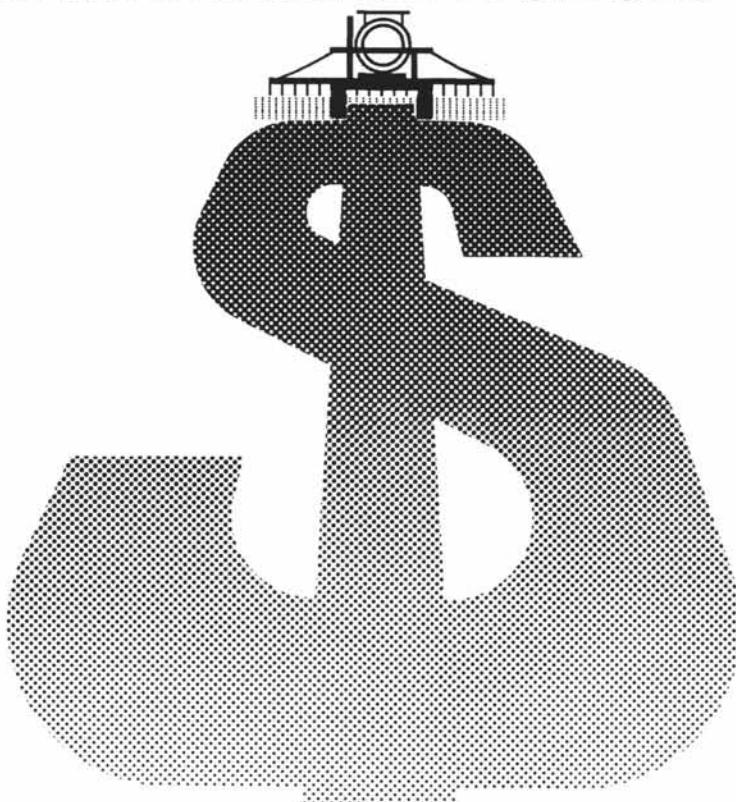


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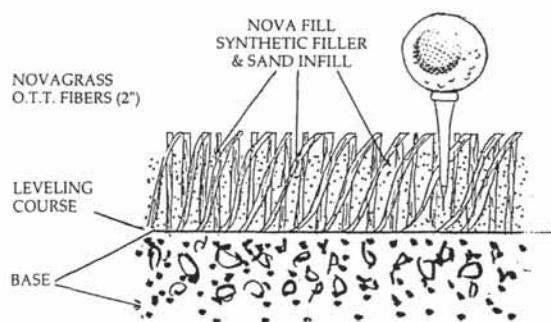
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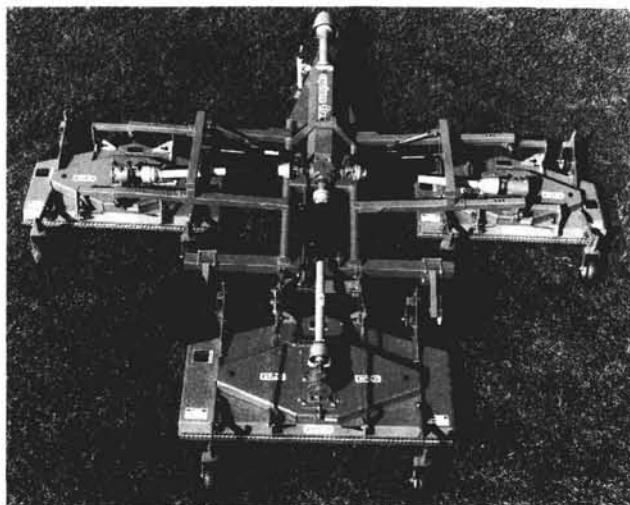
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