

Weather Extremes Plague Turf Again in 1988

This article, penned by Dr. Randy Kane and published in the November 1988 issue of Bull Sheet, reflects upon the 1988 drought that plagued a large swath of the nation's midsection, from the northern Rockies and Plains southeast to the Ohio Valley. Here, Dr. Kane focuses on the drought's effects upon Chicago-area golf course, and the parallels between 1988 and 2005 in terms of weather conditions and impacts are startling, if not downright eerie. And—though more localized than the 1988 drought—the 2005 drought through mid-July as experienced by Chicagoland has actually been more severe. Moisture deficits had surpassed those logged during the 1988 drought, with no significant precipitation and continued heat in the forecast through month's end.

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As in recent years, weather extremes again have had a serious impact on the quality and manageability of golf turf in the Midwest. An usually dry and cool spring was followed abruptly by a very hot and dry late spring to mid-summer period that we won't soon forget. Then late summer was even worse as humidity and rainfall combined with high temperatures to unleash the fungi and stress out *Poa annua*. Many serious turf problems other than disease resulted directly from the temperature and precipitation extremes. Following is a brief account of the meteorological highlights of the 1988 season, and a summary of the turf problems that occurred as a direct result of the weather.

Spring of '88 got off to a fairly warm and wet start, including a record high temperature of 85°F on April 5. Early heavy play was a factor to contend with. Then it turned off cool and dry in late April, with overnight temperatures near or below freezing. Most of the month of May was also cool and dry, with frosts and record cold temperatures occurring as late as the 25th.

This dry and cool weather pattern caused *Poa annua* and older bentgrass varieties to green up and grow very slowly. However, this did seem to force roots deeper into the soil profile, including *Poa annua*. Also, the *Poa* on many area courses seeded very heavily which, along with the slow growth and heavy traffic, resulted in poor putting green quality.

The late spring and summer season of 1988 saw record heat and drought that laid waste to nonirrigated crop lands, home lawns, parks and golf turf, and taxed water supplies and delivery systems to the utmost. Many communities were forced to restrict or ban lawn sprinkling and other nonessential water uses. Temperatures in the 90s were recorded in late May, and the mercury passed the 100-degree mark for the first time on June 20. Total precipitation for May, June and July was as low as 1-1.5" inches in the metropolitan area, and an abysmal 0.5-1" in parts of north central and central Illinois and central Indiana. (Normal rainfall for the three-month period is 11.2" in Chicago.)

Fortunately, most Chicago-area courses have adequate sources of water from wells and/or holding ponds and streams. Greens, tees and fairways received adequate water for the most part, although restrictions limited fairway watering at some courses. The incessant demands placed on irrigation systems

(continued on page 33)

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led to many problems as pumps, water lines and irrigation heads failed at several courses. Most nonirrigated turf areas (e.g., roughs) were dormant by mid-June. Dormant turfs subjected to excessive traffic (e.g., golf carts) were reduced to dust and will have to be reestablished this fall. Many down-state courses without adequate irrigation systems have been extensively damaged, and large acreages of turf will have to be replaced.

Very few disease problems were encountered through early July, because of the lack of rain and very low relative humidities. Localized dry spots were a widespread phenomenon on putting greens and fairways, as were unexplained ring and patch symptoms. However, once humidities increased in mid-July, a dramatic increase in Pythium blight, brown patch, summer patch (*Magnaporthe* sp.) and other diseases occurred.

Also, by late July and into August, the accumulative effects of heat and humidity began to take its toll on *Poa annua*. *Poa* is highly susceptible to heat stress and/or anaerobic conditions (wet wilt), especially where the root system is shallow or restricted. A number of factors appear to interact to cause shallow roots on *Poa*, including: compacted soils and layering; low fertility (especially N and P); low cutting heights; contours and drainage problems; nematodes (!) and root-rotting fungi. Combinations of two or more of these factors appear to be especially deadly.

Large areas of turf were lost on greens and tees where *Poa annua* was the primary grass species present. In most cases, turf was in good shape through the end of July, but two hot spells—August 1st through 4th and August 16th through 18th—brought the greatest trouble. Daily high temps near 100°F and overnight lows in the 80-85° range combined with high humidity. Soil temperatures were near or above 100°F max and stayed above 90°F for extended periods of time. Water management was critical during this period; syringing didn't seem to help the *Poa* at all. Deeper-rooted grasses such as bentgrass and ryegrass survived this heat much better.

After the summers of '83, '87 and '88, it is apparent that we need to work on new management strategies and pest controls to help our turf-grasses withstand summer heat and drought stress, especially if predictions of hotter and drier summers due to the "greenhouse effect" hold true. Different fertility practices and mowing and grooming patterns (including more use of walking greensmowers and "verti-groomers"), and more intensive aerification, should be considered in order to increase root mass and depth and to reduce the effects of high air and soil temperatures. More about NEMATODES at a later date. 

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the Bull Sheet

John Gurke, CGCS
Contributing Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

August 8 – Wee One Foundation's Fundraising Golf Event at Golf Club of Illinois in Algonquin, IL, to benefit **Dan Nielsen** and family. More information follows.

August 13-14 – 2005 Walker Cup Matches at Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, IL, **Jon Jennings**, CGCS host.

August 15 – MAGCS monthly meeting at Water's Edge Golf Club in Worth, IL, **Jason Lemanski** host.

August 17 – Ohio State University/Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Turfgrass Field Day at the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Research and Education Center in Columbus, OH.

August 22 – John Deere Team Championship at Glen Oak Country Club in Glen Ellyn, IL, **Andy Dauksas** host.

September 19 – MAGCS monthly meeting at Idlewild Country Club in Flossmoor, IL, **Kurt Sams**, CGCS host.

September 26 – Wee One Foundation's Annual Golf Outing at Pine Hills Country Club in Wisconsin. More info follows.

October 14-16 – EXPO 2005 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville, KY. More info to follow.

October 3-December 9 – The Rutgers University Professional Golf Turf Management School's Two-Year Certificate Program Fall Session at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ.

For starters, a word about the weather we have been experiencing this summer (as of mid-July): Enough! Hopefully by the time this reaches you, our drought has been broken, your rough is green once again, and you are wearing a wind shirt in the mornings to stave off the cool breezes. Right. As this is being written, hurricane Dennis veered away to the east and left us high and dry, and my patience—especially with the Weather Channel—has been stretched to the brink. Here's hoping for better days, raging rivers and recharged aquifers.



A typical irrigation pond this past July.

At least someone in our industry has figured out a way to stay cool this summer. Dr. Frank Rossi of Cornell University—a frequent visitor and speaker at our educational programs—was spied recently at the University's Field Day “taking one for the team,” so to speak. I'm guessing the stunt was a huge success—who wouldn't want to dunk the doc?



Dr. Rossi shows how low he'll go to raise a few bucks.

Every April our golfers come down with the dreaded “Augusta Syndrome” whereby they watch the Masters on television and immediately wonder why their course can't look like that. That being said, why can't there be a “St. Andrews Syndrome” in July? Or a “Shinnecock Syndrome” in June? If this were the case, I'd be a hero. Just a thought . . .

Congratulations to **Jim Pedersen**, former assistant superintendent of Stonebridge Country Club, who is now the superintendent of Hughes Creek Golf Club. Jim replaces **Darin Ayres**, who has left to pursue his burgeoning landscape-lighting business full-time. Best of luck, Jim!



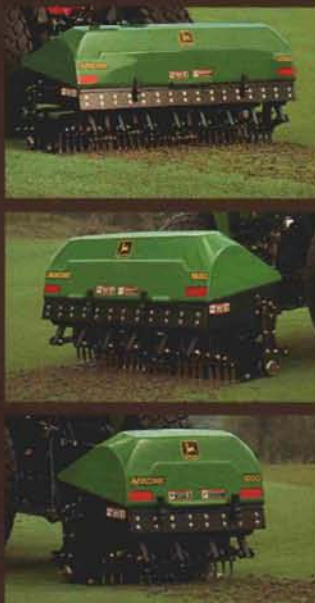
Jim Pedersen, superintendent of Hughes Creek G.C.

If you've caught up with everything by October 14th, why not take a trip to Louisville, Kentucky and check out EXPO 2005? Presented by *Golf-dom*, it is a three-day showcase for the green industry that also features an all-star cast of educational speakers. On the docket are Robert Brame (USGA regional director), Paul B. Latshaw, Bobby Weed and Larry Aylward (*Golf-dom* magazine), to name a few. They've even booked the Charlie Daniels Band hot off the state-fair circuit for a live show on Saturday the 15th! It's a can't-miss deal. To register, go to www.expo.mow.org.

Congratulations to **Kara and Nick Baker** (Riverside Golf Club) on the birth of their first child in June. Colin Charles Baker was a healthy, happy, 6 lb., 5 oz. and 20-inch bundle of joy. New job, new home, new baby—time to think about getting a puppy.

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As noted in Dates to Remember, the Wee One Foundation is very busy this summer. The organization was founded on behalf of Wayne Otto to assist golf-management professionals (or their dependents) who incur overwhelming expenses due to catastrophic illness without comprehensive insurance or adequate financial resources. The Board of Directors is comprised of the following dedicated and generous individuals:

- **Danny Quast**, CGCS—President
- **Rod Johnson**, CGCS—Vice President and Benevolence
- **Beverly Quast**—Secretary
- **Mike Handrich**, CGCS—Membership
- **Dave Radaj**, CGCS; **Mark Petitgoue**; **Paul Bastron**, CGCS—Fundraising
- **Pat Sisk**, CGCS and **Chad Ball**, CGCS—Publicity and Advertising

Most of you have received mailings from this organization and know of its current cause—to help the family of Dan Nielsen (Golf Club of Illinois) through Dan's bout with pancreatic carcinoma. On Monday, August 8, the Wee One Foundation and Golf Club of Illinois will hold a fundraising golf event to help Dan, his wife Kira, and their four boys Zachary, Tyler, Nick and Travis, get through this difficult time. The Foundation is also asking you to join them and help other families who need and deserve our assistance. Call Mike Handrich at Racine Country Club at 262-637-9050 for information on how you can help.

I know I sound like a broken record every August, but it's always true—outstanding job once again by **Ken Lapp** and the staff at Cog Hill Country Club in providing another spectacular golf course for yet another Western Open. You guys make it look easy (and it's starting to tick me off!). Congratulations on a great event, guys! And special thanks to **Tracy Murphy** and Murphy's Lemont Paving for hosting their hospitality tent on Saturday the 9th during the tournament. Hopefully many of you were able to attend both.

Bits of wisdom from around MAGCS:

In its recent 50th-issue extravaganza, *Superintendent* magazine listed 50 tips from 50 golf pros, which included several from current and past MAGCS members. The following is an account of these tidbits of wisdom . . .

"Learn to see the whole picture, not just part."

—**Harry Lovero**
Orchard Valley G.C.

"If you can hold your tongue, you can hold your job."

—**Bruce Williams**, CGCS
Los Angeles C.C.

"For every action there is a reaction."

—**Dennis Wilson**
Sunset Ridge C.C.

"Come to work each day with the attitude 'what can I do for you today?'"

—**Doug Davis**
Flagg Creek G.C.

The Walker Cup Matches are coming to Chicago Golf Club (Jon Jennings, CGCS host) this month for the first time since 1928. Although the American team of amateurs led by Bobby Jones won handily then, and throughout the years the Americans have a distinct edge in the matches against the Great Britain and Ireland teams, the last three matches were won by the bad guys. Make sure to get out to Wheaton and catch some of the action and cheer on our team. If that isn't possible, look for it on Golf Channel on the 13th and 14th. Good luck to Jon, **Aaron Willing**, and all the staff and volunteers, and to Team USA!

The 5th Annual John Buck Memorial Golf Fundraiser took place on June 29 at Hughes Creek Golf Club in Elburn, IL (Darin Ayres hosting his last event!) and was a complete success. The event is a four-person scramble format with a maximum score of bogey allowed on any given hole. The team from Blackberry Oaks Golf Club in Bristol took top honors as Chad Johansen rode the backs of ringers Jim Campbell, Gabe Salazar and **Steve Holich**. Numerous betting holes offered chances to win a slew of prizes as well as the coveted Grey Goose gift basket, compliments of Mike (**Sharon**) **Riesenbeck**. The day was a hot one, but relief was only a beverage cart away (or an icy towel from Jen and Kelli). The golf course was in marvelous shape, and a full field of 144 enjoyed themselves both on the course and in the clubhouse afterward. Overall, it is estimated that this day raised over \$10,000 for the various scholarships—quite an impressive achievement! Highlights included several of Dave Meyer's and John Buck's family members and close friends being in attendance; the raffling of the 2005 John Deere CS Gator vehicle to lucky winner Bob Darnell (who proceeded to donate it back to the cause in an extremely generous gesture); the presentation of a plaque to Kelli Zopfi of J.W.

Turf in appreciation for all she does for the scholarship funds from MAGCS, Kane County Farm Bureau, NWIGCSA, Buck Brothers and J.W. Turf; and, of course, the pig roast. There are many thanks to pass around, and they include Hughes Creek G.C. and its great staff, Citizens Bank of Genoa, First Community Bank of Elgin, all raffle-ticket purchasers and sellers, Ken Kane of AFLAC, Dakota, Lastec, Kane County Farm Bureau, John Deere, Southern Green, Cress Creek C.C., and of course, all the golfers who made the day possible.



Dave Blomquist, John Gurke, Holly Gilmour, Luke Cella and Todd Schmitz.



J.W. Turf's Jen and Kelli with Kevin DeRoo—the iced towels were a GREAT idea!



Danna and Kelli with Bob Darnell, the winner of the Gator raffle.



Ed Braunsky, Tim Johnson, Ken Shepherd and Jim McNair.



Either Eddie Braunsky got too much sun, or this was dinner. You decide.



Greg Johnson, Brad Legnaioli, Paul Schaefer and Paul Wagner cool off after the round.



The winning team from Blackberry Oaks—Gabe Salazar, Chad Johansen, Jim Campbell and Steve Holich.



Bob Darnell, Holly, John Buck's daughter Shelley Seyllor, and his old friend Dan Thorpe (pictured just as they were seen by the Grey Goose-winning photographer).

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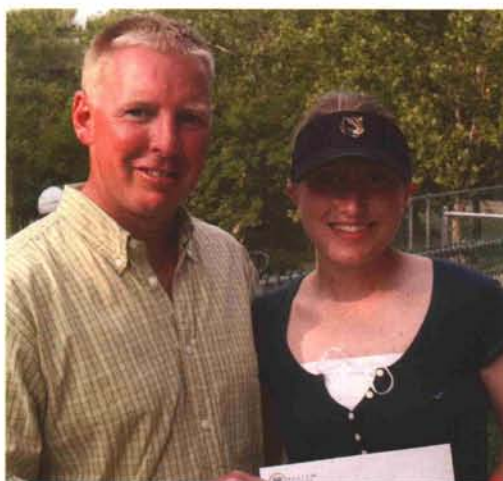
Cougars Lose, But MAGCS Family Night at the Ballpark Is a Winner

There were many familiar faces and some new ones this year at the MAGCS Family Night, held at the Kane County Cougars game. Despite steamy weather and with no GCSAA education points available for the event, 160 people enjoyed the evening at the ballpark. In fact, although the picnic was moved up a month this year, it still felt like a warm August night at Elfstrom Stadium. Despite the Cougar loss, the night was very entertaining. Perhaps the only thing better this year could have been a rainout! A little Cougar trivia—guess how many players have made it to “the show” from the franchise in their 15-year history in Geneva? (Answer appears at the end.)

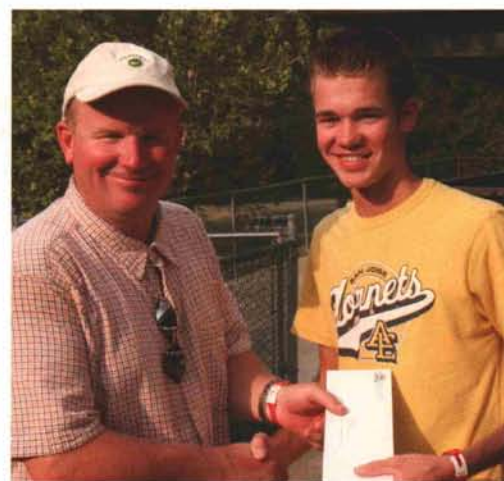
Thank you to our sponsors for this event: Nature's Way Landscaping and Tree Care, Nels J. Johnson Tree Experts, Inc., Palatine Oil Company and Turf Professionals Equipment Company. A special thanks goes to the Women's Center for Health (the practice of Tim Anderson's wife, Linda) for sponsoring the ever-popular face-painter and cookies.

This year, we invited the MAGCS scholarship winners to the picnic to receive their award. Congratulations to those winners that were able to make it out to the game: Alex Clesen, daughter of Tom Clesen; Ben Behrman, son of Dave Behrman; and Nycole Stawinoga, daughter of Tom Stawinoga. Congratulations to the Wheelers, who celebrated their first wedding anniversary at the ballpark with the group.

Picnic-goers who stayed after the game saw skydivers flawlessly land on the mound and a fireworks show to boot. All in all, the food was good, the drinks were cold and the kids fell asleep on the way home. By the way, in their brief existence, the Cougars have produced more than 70 major leaguers. Thanks again to all those who attended and those who sponsored this event.



Todd Schmitz and scholarship winner
Nycole Stawinoga.



Tony Kalina and scholarship winner
Ben Behrman.

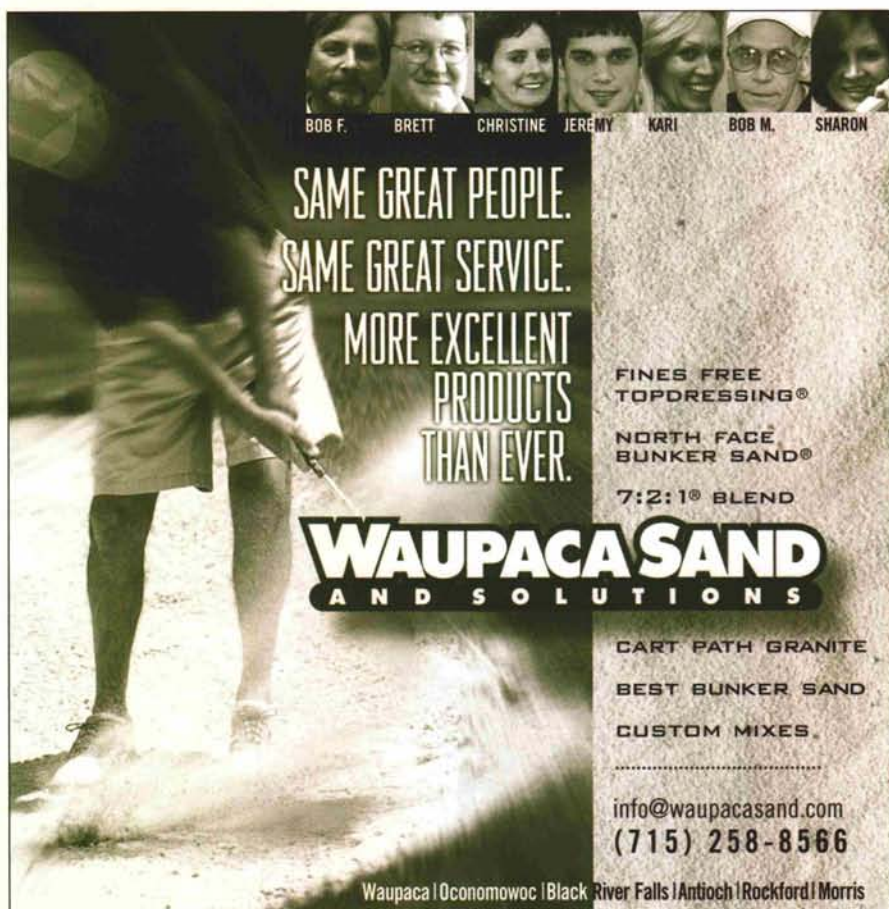


Scott Witte and scholarship winner
Alex Clesen.



The Wheelers celebrate their
first wedding anniversary.

(pictures continued on page 41)



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