

Weathered, Worn and Battered

By Todd Lowe

Cold conditions continue to plague Florida golf courses, as below-normal temperatures have persisted since early January. A golf course superintendent from Southwest Florida questioned a local meteorologist about weather conditions, and below are a few of the reported facts:

- There have been nine morning lows in the 30s. In an average year, we reach the 30s only a few mornings for the entire winter season.
- Three morning low records have been broken.
- The coolest high temperature was tied on Jan 10.
- The area has tied "the record" for consecutive lows below 50 F.

On Jan. 9, a high of 52 F was reached at midnight, but around 8 a.m. tem-

peratures fell into the 30s and remained there all day. The coolest high temperature was 40 F, so, if you overlook midnight, Jan. 9 could be the coldest day ever in Ft. Myers.

The turf actually began to come out of winter dormancy and turn green on lower mowed surfaces when a slight reprieve from the cold weather was experienced in late January. Believe it or not, this factor also had a negative impact on some golf courses that deal with plant-parasitic nematodes, as the nematodes became active as well.

Soil temperature dropped shortly thereafter with several cold fronts and frosts, and this caused additional turf loss, as already-thin areas received continued golfer traffic and no turf recovery. Putting green perimeters have been the most widely damaged areas due to the stresses of increased mower turning,

golfer entry and exit, and shade.

Cold fronts have generally been accompanied by rain. In fact, many superintendents have reported no irrigation applied in 2010 to date. This has had a beneficial impact on lake levels, as they are very high on most golf courses, but excessive leaf and soil moisture and moderate temperatures can increase turf diseases. Patch diseases have been observed at a few golf courses, and the University of Florida turf pathology lab has reported a high incidence of Pythium in golf course samples. Preventive fungicide programs should be continued until warmer and drier conditions occur.

Recovery simply cannot occur until active turf growth resumes with warmer soil temperatures. Multiple days above 80F and nights above 60F are necessary to make any marked improvements



1-877-FIS-1NOW
www.fisoutdoor.com




DELIVERING OUTDOOR TO YOU!



RAIN BIRD
IC™ System

NEW

- * The World's easiest system to install and operate.
- * Control system installs underground, protected and out of sight.
- * Integrated directly into rotor or valve.
- * Superior Surge Protection.

Save Water, Save Time, Save Money...Get it @ FIS

WE'VE GOT IT ALL

EQUIPMENT	LIGHTING	CHEMICALS	FERTILIZER	TOOLS
				
PUMPS	IRRIGATION	MULCH	LANDSCAPE	GOLF
				

in turf quality. Sustained warm air temperatures are necessary to significantly raise soil temperatures. Active bermudagrass recovery can occur when soil temperatures rise above 65 F at a 4-inch depth.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Following are February cold-damage comments from John Foy, USGA Green Section director of the Florida Region.

For the northern third of Florida, freezing temperatures occurred for several nights in a row, and bermudagrass and seashore paspalum went fully dormant and off-color.

Most golfers in this part of the state are more understanding, as they witness this annually. But, with the large-acreage winter overseeding programs being discontinued at many courses, there have been concerns expressed

Only once in my 25-year career with the Green Section has true bermudagrass winter kill been encountered in Florida. That was in 1987 and was limited to a few putting greens in the Panhandle.

about the brown grass. Temperatures have not sufficiently warmed enough to allow the bermudagrass to break winter dormancy.

The resumption of sustained growth in North Florida cannot be expected for at least a couple of months, and the continuation of aggressive traffic management is essential to minimize damage and loss of turf coverage. Only once in my 25-year career with the

Green Section has true bermudagrass winter kill been encountered in Florida. That was in 1987 and was limited to a few putting greens in the Panhandle. In these cases, there was a direct correlation between the damaged areas and moderate to severe shade. However, this was before the introduction of the ultradwarf bermudagrasses and their widespread use. Not having previously experienced a similar prolonged stretch of cold temperatures with the ultradwarfs, there are definitely some concerns about the potential for low temperature injury, and even winter kill, on greens in the northern part of the state. Oklahoma State University research determined that the rel-

Photo Right: Thin brown roughs like this that lingered well into April are finally greening up. Photo by Joel Jackson

Legendary greens and bunkers have one thing in common...
they both began with the best soil.

Beneath every meticulously groomed green is dirt. And, the best dirt doesn't just happen. At **Golf Agronomics Supply & Handling** we've been perfecting golf course soil and sand for more than a decade. Our computerized soil blending equipment ensures that the mix you receive meets your exacting specifications – every order, every time. With production facilities located throughout the Southeast, Golf Agronomics offers volume orders and next day service.

GOLF AGRONOMICS SUPPLY & HANDLING

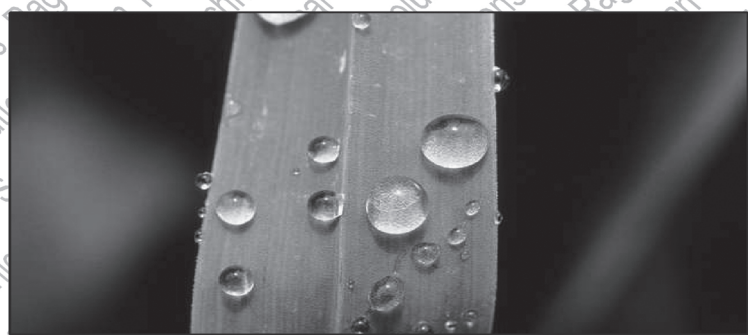
Serving the Carolinas and Florida
800-626-1359 • FAX (941) 955-4690
www.golfag.com



Are you ready to be rid of your Hydraulic Irrigation Control System?

RTS can help you plan and implement innovative and cost-effective solutions.

- *CONSULTATION**
- *PLANNING**
- *BIDDING**
- *INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT**
- *PROGRAMMING**
- *TRAINING**
- *AS-BUILTS**
- *DOCUMENTATION**



dave@ragantechnical.com (561) 776-9713