

# GOLF COURSE NEWS

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## Winter hangover lingers in Midwest

Crown damage, desiccation rampant

By MARK LESLIE

Superintendents from Minnesota and Michigan to Iowa and Illinois were up against the wall this spring, their courses belted with desiccation, crown damage and direct low-temperature kill that set season openings back weeks.

"Instead of having March, April, May, we're having March, March, March," said Bruce Williams of Bob O'Link Golf Club in Highland Park, Ill., president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). "Harsh winter kill seems endemic from Colorado through Kansas, Iowa and areas like that."

"When we first started

greening up in late April — which is very late for us — all the high spots came out green and all the low spots were dead stone-cold dormant," said Dick Stuntz of Alvarado Country Club in Lawrence, Kan., attributing damage to a snowmelt that froze again. "Guys with ryegrass fairways lost it. For those of us with zoysiagrass, the loss isn't large but it will be a terribly slow recovery."

While Jerry Faubel of Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club was "very fortunate and escaped damage" because he added drainage in key areas last year, the former GCSAA president said: "Courses throughout

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## Jacksonville restoration still in limbo

By HAL PHILLIPS

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — An extremely complicated turf war has developed here concerning property that used to be a golf course, and may be again. Officials at the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) in Tallahassee will decide this month whether the city of Jacksonville will retain funds to restore a golf course on a controversial urban parcel known as Blue Cypress.

Once a privately owned golf facility called University Golf & Country Club, the Blue Cypress land was

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## Survey: Benefits on the rise

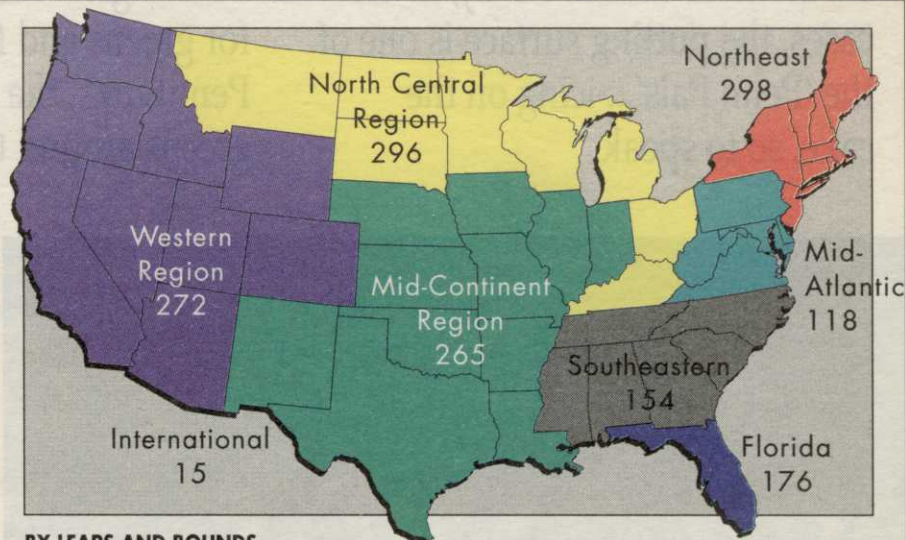
By TERRY BUCHEN

Since this decade began, I have been taking a random survey of superintendents regarding the fringe benefits they receive. I have some interesting results to report.

The first question I usually ask is whether they benefit, in both wages and fringe benefits, as a result of their most recent job change. The answer is an overwhelming "yes". Most supers believe they are underpaid and the only way to improve themselves professionally is to make a job change for more money and benefits.

Everyone willing to share the "before/after" comparison of their most old/new jobs enhanced their total package significantly. The average tenure of a super prior to the 1980s was 10 to 12 years. Today a super will stay 4 to 5 years until a better opportunity

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#### BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Just five years old, the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, as administered by the New York State Audubon Society, has experienced astounding growth. For an update on one of golf's most striking environmental success stories, see page 15.

## Palmer Mgmt. has grand expansion plans

By PETER BLAIS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Arnold Palmer Golf Management, operator of 17 courses nationwide, plans to eventually bring as many as 500 courses under its management wing through a variety of mergers, acquisitions, and other arrangements, according to company President Peter Nanula.

Palmer Golf recently launched its campaign by reaching an agreement with Pennsylvania-based Toll Brothers Inc., a leading developer of luxury homes, to operate courses at Toll Brothers' developments and jointly acquire troubled resi-

dential golf communities nationwide.

Palmer-managed Bay Hill here also hosted a summit meeting in March when the heads of 15 management companies with portfolios ranging from five to 30 golf facilities discussed the topic of consolidation within the management industry. The recent acquisition of 43-course Golf Enterprises Inc. by National Golf Properties, the real estate investment trust established by the founders of giant American Golf Corp., was also a major topic.

Nanula told the *Orange County Busi-*

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## Killed by winter

Continued from page 1

Michigan were hit. Not many people lost entire green surfaces. But it [winter kill] is everywhere — most of it in small, isolated areas."

In Iowa, where snowfall wasn't as heavy as other states, uncovered turf suffered from desiccation attributed to high winds and direct low-temperature kill. "From Des Moines west was the hardest hit," said Rick Tegtmeier of Elmcrest Country Club in Cedar Rapids. "They had very little snowfall compared to what we had, and they had strong winds. Plus a lot of them are ryegrass."

All this havoc came on the coattails of a discouraging 1995 in the North Central U.S. Indeed, according to Williams, "Part of the problem is coming back from injury incurred because of the extreme heat in the Chicago area last summer. When we went into winter dormancy, not all the courses had healed completely."

"Desiccation, direct low-temperature kill and crown hydration. We got the triple-whammy," he added. "It's apparent, at least in the Chicago metropolitan area, that damage was directed more toward courses with a higher percentage of poa annua. The newer courses that have USGA [U.S. Golf Association]-spec greens and a higher percentage of bentgrass appear to have fared better."

That holds true in most cases. But there were exceptions, including Iowans Tegtmeier and Dennis Watters of Fort Dodge Country Club. Elmcrest came through the winter unscathed because it sits "very well protected in the heart of the city" and Tegtmeier polycovered his poa annua-dominated greens. And Watters reported his most serious losses on three of his sandier greens as opposed to his native-soil greens.

"It's a guess and a gamble these days, since the ban on mercury," said Jim Nicol of Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids, Minn. He said late-March and early-April storms kept snowcover on his course long enough that "the protectants [on the turf] ran out. My bentgrass was clean and the poa in sandy areas was pretty clean. But poa in wooded areas and in heavy soil got hit hard."

All this damage delayed openings at some courses in the region. And even at courses that did open on time, continued cold and inclement weather caused some devastating financial losses.

"People I know all opened late — the week of April 17, which is 12 days late for us," said Nicol.

"Golf overall has been down severely," Faubel said. "We haven't had tremendous amounts of rain, but it's been so cold that the turf is slow recovering and participation in golf has really fallen off."

"Most clubs don't expect a lot of activity in the months of March

and April, but we all expect things to pick up in May, and that hasn't happened yet," Williams said. "The daily-fee and municipal operations really feel the brunt of it because they're accustomed to 150 rounds a day this time of the year, and cart revenues. And it's an expendable commodity. Once the day is over, you can't make that day up later in the year."

### THE FIX-UP

In the wake of the damage, superintendents are battling to bring their courses back up to par. First has come the wait for soil temperatures to warm up to

### RELATED STORY NEXT PAGE

normal — or help with greens covers — so bentgrass could grow and regrowth quicken.

"We still are covering the greens that suffered the most winter kill with evergreen polycovers at night," Williams said in mid-May. "We have seedlings emerging and want to make sure they survive. It gives us about another 10 degrees soil temperature. We're running about 54 degrees soil temperature at a 2-inch depth at noon. Optimum this time of year is the

62-degree range.

"The biological indicators are at least two to three weeks behind normal, and we're 10 degrees behind schedule in terms of soil temperatures."

Watters agreed: "We're still in April as far as soil temperature is concerned."

"We're just starting to get 60-degree soil temperatures now," said Nicol from Minnesota. "My growth calendar is about two weeks behind."

Saying that "patience begins to wear thin" when grass-growing conditions are not optimal, Williams warned: "We have to

remember that we can't go out and do things that are going to push the grass and force it into something that is going to cause problems down the road, vis a vis over-fertilization — those types of things which will develop top growth with no roots. That will set you up for damage in the summer of '96."

The prognosis for recovery?

"We who deal with it see the brighter side of things," Williams said. "The bad news is, the poa died. The good news is, it's coming back. At this point in time anything green would be acceptable."

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