

**A**pril was a crazy month, and about the best thing you can say about it is that it's over.

I travelled the States extensively in April and early May. Six trips in seven weeks. I went to Scottsdale, Ariz.; Atlanta and Augusta, Ga.; Cleveland; Washington, D.C.; Asheville, N.C.; then finally Charlotte, N.C. before returning home to Lawrence, Kan.

At almost every stop I met a superintendent or two who was in some state of disgust with the weather, with gas prices, with labor, with budgets.

I was also on the phone a lot, and heard even more telling stories there. A superintendent in Portland, Ore., told me that they had just endured the coolest, wettest April they had ever had. They know wet weather in Portland, but only four days with temperatures above 60 degrees? That just steps right on the throat of progress early on in what is going to be an important season for many golf courses.

The most telling story I heard was from a northern superintendent. We were having a nice conversation, but when I turned the conversation to "how's business up there?" his tone took a sudden sharp turn.

"It's just terrible – absolutely awful," he growled.

He told me their April was brutally cold. The biggest slap in the face had just happened to him that day. It was the next-to-last day of April, and the course was hosting the local chamber of commerce for a golf event. The weather started off cold and then turned colder, finally spitting snow at the shivering golfers.

The chamber of commerce waved the white flag and took their members into the clubhouse for an early lunch. The superintendent was beside himself. "Even the chamber of commerce can't pretend that they want to golf in the weather we've been having," he groaned.

The Ohio Turfgrass Foundation sent out a press release stating the severity the cool, wet April was having on turf where most of the *Golf-dom* staff calls home. In many parts of the country the wet weather was pushing rivers beyond their limits. And in Texas, Oklahoma and parts

## Ready for Luck to Turn Around

BY SETH JONES



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of Arkansas and Louisiana, record drought.

It's not just the weather but also the economy. One superintendent told me that a few corporate events he used to count on at his course were once again cancelling. "Give us one more year to get back," they were telling him. Throw in those other outlying factors like rising gas prices, and you know even better than I do that this golf season stumbled in April.

Worst of all were the 300 tornadoes that wreaked havoc and killed hundreds in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and surrounding areas. It's like the bumper sticker reads: What's next? Gravity?

One of my favorite non-bumper sticker quotes is from sausage king Jimmy Dean. Dean was also known to sing a mean country song, but in my book, he's famous for producing the best breakfast sausage for what we call the "Jonesy scramble" at my house.

Mr. Dean once told a reporter for *Esquire* magazine, "You have to test your luck every day, because you might be walking around lucky all day and not even know it."

The good news is that April always leads to May. May 1<sup>st</sup> brought the breathtaking news of something I'll always remember: the announcement from President Barack Obama that Osama bin Laden was dead, shot twice by Navy Seals. How's that for starting a month off with a bang?

Superintendents across the country knew that they were in fact *not* lucky in the month of April. But the U.S. Open is right around the corner, signaling the most productive time of the year for golf. The news is even talking about gas prices dropping in the next few weeks.

So do like Mr. Dean said, and keep testing your luck every day. Eventually, it'll turn around. And when it does, you want to be ready.

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