



## President's Message **THE WEATHER**

Boy, do we need a rain; what I wouldn't give for an all day shower. I need it as badly as the golf course does. Although it isn't 8:00 A.M. yet, it is beastly hot already, and it promises to be another near 100 degree July day. No doubt that by the time the sun reaches its zenith, blazing down with incredible intensity and purpose, it will make Madison feel as uncomfortable as Equatorial Africa. I know it will rain again sometime, but the cloudless sky doesn't seem to promise much for awhile. How could any Golf Course Superintendent be in a good mood today?

Golf Course Superintendents are slaves to the weather. Whether we declare any season successful, merely average or not so good usually depends on the kind of weather given to that year. Try as we might, we can only do so much to moderate its influences. I always share this thought with the member who is praising the condition of the golf course: "Thanks, but I must give some credit to the good weather we've been having, and please let the weather help shoulder the burden of blame when conditions aren't what either of us would like them to be."

Sometimes the wrong kind of weather cancels out our greatest and most heroic efforts. And there are the times I harbor bitterness and resentment over how much the weather affects my mood and my state of mind. Last Wednesday dawned hot and jungle-like, and when I got to work the skies were gray and overcast, with ragged edges of black clouds. Winds were out of the southwest and Mike Nelson felt there was about a 30 percent chance for some significant rain. I was thrilled and had

already, albeit prematurely, started feeling better about everything. As the morning went on, the storm clouds became darker and filled the western skies. A few warm, immense errant drops of rain sprinkled the golf course. The wind picked up and started to gust. It looked more and more like it really was going to rain — seemingly there was no way we could miss this time. But by noon the clouds had pushed around to the north and the sky had started to lighten and brighten. What a sinking feeling — disappointed again. And my spirits that were so high at mid-morning had fallen to where they'd been for too many days already. By now, I should know better than to count on the weather. Ever.

"Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody can do anything about it" is a proverb that has as much truth to it as any. We celebrate it and condemn it; we curse it, slander and implore it; we rage against it, pray for it and even thank it. But there is no denying that unwaivering, constant fact: we can't do a thing about it, let alone improve it to suit ourselves.

For ten years I was more psychologically insulated from the impact of the weather than I have been the last three years. Youthfulness may have been a part of it, but hindsight tells me that more likely it was because I was lucky enough to have a pretty good weatherman working for me. Vincent had a keen sense of observation about nearly everything, but the weather in particular seldom fooled him. There were times I felt he qualified as a weather clairvoyant — he was correct in his forecasts more often than he was wrong. Years of farming in the rolling hills north and west of Madison sharpened and refined his perception about the weather, and he used this sixth sense and the clues nature gave him to gauge what to expect. I lost this "inside" information when he retired from full time duty three years ago. I've missed him and his forecasts.

**This spring was a turning point. I had to have more information about the weather. It was insane to be so affected by it and yet have so little knowledge of what to expect.** And if you live in Madison and need that kind of help, there's only one person and one place to go to — Mike Nelson and Weather Cen-

tral. Mike hardly fits the image of many television weathermen — he is a meteorologist rather than an actor (although I envy his comfortable presence on TV when he reports on the weather on WKOW-TV). Mike grew up playing golf at Blackhawk Country Club and his father is on our Board of Directors. His dad has told me that Mike's interest in meteorology and weather forecasting goes back to his grade school days, so Mike is no Johnny-come-lately on the weather scene. Many of you will remember the excellent talk he gave at our meeting in Wisconsin Rapids last summer.

Mike and his company have the latest equipment used in weather forecasting and are out front in the techniques they use in developing their forecasts — computers, satellite information, National Weather Service data, lightning detectors, you name it. If it's the state of the art, they either developed it or have it in use. I can't help but think everyone at Weather Central draws some input from the UW—Madison Meteorology Department, too, which is generally regarded as the finest in the country. The forecasts I get from Mike are even better than the ones Vince used to give me. There is no higher compliment than that!

If you've ever given a thought to subscribing to a weather service, please think about it some more. It is the best money I've spent in a long time. I think it is similar to using the USGA Green Section Turf Advisory Service. The service is nearly insignificant in cost, especially in the context of the money we spend on labor, machinery and pesticides. The information has been valuable to me in making any number of decisions — whether to aerify or not, helping to decide if we should continue topdressing or if we should stop, making sure the waterman is off the golf course because of strong lightning storms west of Madison, and warning players of imminent violent weather. It makes risk-taking decisions easier to make and that one right decision pays for the service for the entire year.

The forecasters aren't always right, but it easily beats sticking your finger in your mouth and holding it up to the wind.

Unless you have a Vincent Noltner!

Monroe S. Miller