

WISCONSIN'S GOLF COURSES: LOOKING BACK OVER 1984



Southeast Report

By Bob Erdahl

The general consensus among the 15 Southeast Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents that I interviewed was that 1984 was a welcome relief from the scorching 1983 season. Most courses emerged from the winter of 83/84 with very little snowmold and desiccation damage. A cold spring gave way to an average summer that contained timely rainfall until the heat and drought finally arrived in August. A beautiful September was short lived as almost the entire month of October was so wet that many maintenance and construction projects had to be cancelled.

Play at private clubs was about average during the 1984 season. Public courses saw an increase in traffic that would have led to a very successful season had not the miserable October cut down on late season play.

The following paragraphs contain a brief summary of the state of green, tee, and fairway maintenance in Southeastern Wisconsin. The information is timely for all WGCSA members as well as a record for future Golf Course Superintendents.

Greens in Southeast Wisconsin have reached an almost universal 1/8" cutting height. Several courses are cutting with hand mowers while others use them for just the cleanup pass. All the superintendents I interviewed topdress with either a pure sand or a "dirty sand." The average frequency for topdressing is every 3-4 weeks and the amount of sand built up varies from 1/4"-3". Fall

aerification is still popular and most courses verticut on a 2-3 week schedule. Nitrogen application ranges from 1.0-2.5 lbs. of N/M/year. The use of wetting agents is limited to localized dry spots at some courses, while other courses treat all the greens with as much as 40 oz. wetting agent/M/year. Three quarters of the superintendents have used Rubigan with varying degrees of success. Some feel that 2.0 oz. Rubigan/M/year is not enough to produce the desired growth retardation of *Poa annua*.

Tee maintenance at many courses is almost at the same level as green maintenance. Walking mowers are used by several courses with cutting heights as low as 3/16". I can remember when that would have been a respectable height of cut for greens! Nitrogen is applied in a range of 1.5-4.0 lbs. N/M/year. Most superintendents said they plan to topdress and overseed more in the future.

Major changes are occurring in fairway maintenance in Southeast Wisconsin. In 1985, one third of the superintendents interviewed will be mowing fairways with light-weight mowers and removing the clippings. Another third will be mowing selected areas with light-weight mowers. Severely contoured fairways are not on the immediate horizon due to the problems that arise when converting fairway turf to roughs. New pesticides are also contributing to the improvement in fairway maintenance. Oflanol has been used successfully against *Atenius* by several courses and Bayleton continues to provide excellent control of *Poa annua* decline. A new growth retardant for *Poa annua*, Cutlass, has been used experimentally by many superintendents and all report encouraging results.

Golf course redesign continues in Southeast Wisconsin with several courses in the process of changing hole layouts, building new tees, adding sand traps, or updating their irrigation systems.

While 1984 will go down as a successful year for most of the Golf Course Superintendents in Southeast Wisconsin, we are all

looking forward to 1985 when we can try out new maintenance techniques, experiment with new pesticides, start new construction projects, or any of the other activities that make our profession so challenging and rewarding.



Northeast Report

By Roger Bell

The most recent year saw most of the golf courses in northeastern Wisconsin in good shape. The weather here has run the gamut of meteorological phenomena. Last fall was very wet and warm and consequently plants were not prepared for the record cold temperatures that followed in late December. Although the grasses on our courses were covered with a nice blanket of insulating snow, the trees and shrubs were not spared. By February, we were at the other end of the spectrum weatherwise, as record high temperatures cost us our snow cover and caused some of the trees and shrubs to start to leaf out. The cold snowless weather that followed threatened our grasses with desiccation problems but we were probably saved by the high soil moisture that we had going into winter. Spring was very slow in coming and arrived with considerable rain. Our spring projects were delayed by the weather, but we were able to open our courses earlier than usual anyway because the frost never was driven back down too deep after the February thaw. Those of us who have been installing drainage in the past few years were grateful and wished we had

done more. Late spring and early summer were just great weather-wise; we had timely rains and rounds of play were high. Most of us (the exception being those in the southern part of our area) were spared the dry summer and early fall that bothered our friends in south-central Wisconsin.

As far as disease problems go, some of us had snow mold problems on untreated areas but the damage was superficial and gone almost as soon as green-up occurred. We saw two substantial outbreaks of pythium but they were not of the severity of the outbreak in 1983 when we had pythium problems for two months.

The new big thing in northeastern Wisconsin was lightweight fairway mowing. Four or the five of us doing this are delighted with the results. Our members and especially their guests are raving about the playing conditions of the fairways. A special bonus that we all noticed is that we did not miss a mowing in spite of the very wet spring and fall.

We are now only four to six weeks from that lovely white cover of snow. We could use a little less of the rain we have been getting so we could get done with our fall building projects. Overall, we have had a good year—one that saw most of our courses in better condition than ever before.



Northern & Central Report

By Bill Roberts

The common denominator in the Northern and North Central sections of Wisconsin appeared to be abundant precipitation, moderate temperatures and very little disease pressure. Those factors produced a "lot of play" over some exceptionally well-conditioned

turfgrass. Golf Course Superintendents in this part of the State were unanimous in their descriptions of 1984 as a very good year, particularly when viewed in relationship to the summer of 1983.

JEFF BOTTENSEK, Superintendent at Stevens Point Country Club, reports more than adequate rainfall and is seeing additional fairway management pressure relative to mowing height and fungicide programs. Jeff completed installation of his automatic irrigation system in 1984.

Bull's Eye Country Club's CLIFF BRANDL completed the relocation and re-building of his practice putting green and Number 1 tee as a result of the new clubhouse construction at his club. He echoed the "good year" sentiment noting very little disease pressure relative to 1983.

Also in Wisconsin Rapids, Superintendent DAVID MURGA-TROYD, Ridges Inn and Country Club indicated "a good year with lots of rain." David saw less disease incidence this season while he concentrated on the completion of additional cart paths, a new practice green, a new driving range tee and a new practice bunker.

DON PETERSON of Waupaca Country Club reports excellent results with his lightweight, fairway contour mowing program. Waupaca saw heavy play while hosting numerous events and tournaments. With no real turf pest problems evident, Don even found time to complete some drainage work this summer.

Rhineland Country Club Golf Course Superintendent BRIAN J. KARNOSKY is more than pleased with the way his golf course held up this summer under increased play. Brian indicated only minor turf disease pressure although Dutch Elm Disease continues to take its toll on some very valuable specimens. He is, of course, meticulously following his tree replacement program using his own nursery stock, which includes a new, rapidly-growing Larch variety.

DICK THALACKER of Thal Acres Country Club in Westfield has had a busy summer re-building his back nine cart paths, adding a couple of bunkers and renovating several tees. Dick, too, noted the lack of disease pressure and the abundant precipitation this summer.

JEFF PARKS, Lake Arrowhead Country Club, spent a great part of

his season "growing-in" and preparing his back 9 for play in 1985. With "enough rain and very little disease," Jeff saw a 9 percent increase in play in 1984.



Southern and Western Report

By Monroe S. Miller

Western, southwestern and south central Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents have, in general, declared 1984 "a good year." Those that wouldn't go quite that far at least felt that 1984 was much better than 1983.

Weather is always significant in determining what kind of year we have on our golf courses. The season started out wet, moved into a "normal" pattern until mid-July, and after that time until late September we experienced very little moisture. There was a two month period that made the task of keeping golf courses in premier playing condition difficult, at best.

Several other things will make 1984 significant when reviewed in future years. There was a dramatic and substantial move in this part of our state toward lightweight mowing of fairways. Implements used ranged from greensmowers to Toro 84's to the Jacobsen HF-5. But the machine that really seemed to catch this year for more intense fairway management was the Ransomes' Motor 180. Most managers that took the step toward lightweight mowing also did some experimenting with clipping harvest. Experimentation was about as far as it went with most, although a couple of our colleagues did follow the practice for the bulk of the season. The jury is still out as to whether or not this practice will result in fairway turf that is enough improved to merit its widespread use.

SEPTEMBER WGCSA MEETING ANOTHER WINNER

Most golf courses that have had a history of problems with the BTA grub invested in the insecticide Oftenol. The results reported back indicate that this material worked exceptionally well. Many that did not use it have budgeted and scheduled the material for next season. Most of the BTA problems, by the way, are on fairway grass.

A couple of other points concerning fairway management are worth note. The height of cut is finding its way down and in a number of cases is approaching the 1/2" mark. There also seems to be a trend toward lesser amounts of fertilizer for fairways, and applications are being made at lower rates of N/M. The use of the newer generations of fungicides have been a real help, also.

The "hot" topic of discussion among players and Golf Course Superintendents seems no longer to be the speed of greens. It is becoming more and more common to see cutting heights on putting surfaces approach the 1/8" level for everyday play. Topdressing is still a common practice, but my sense after discussions on this topic is that the frequency seems to have declined.

One other note this reporter has observed, and it is, I think, an encouraging one. There seems to be more activity with rebuilding, modification and master plans, and this activity is more and more often being done under the watchful and helpful eye of the Golf Course Architect. It is nearly to the point where one might wonder if a designer will set up an office somewhere in the state to deal with this trend.

And, as always, most of us end up this year with the thought that next year will always be better.

Milwaukee Country Club's Danny Quast had his golf course in championship condition for WGCSA members that played there at the September meeting. Beautiful autumn weather, careful planning on Dan's part, and the finest of service from other Club staff members led to another great meeting for Wisconsin's golf course managers. Club officials — Hal Kuehl and Bill Allis — were kind enough to join the meeting for the evening meal and for the opportunity to hear WGCSA Honorary member Dr. Bill Daniel of Purdue University. Dr. Daniel led the assembled group on a trip back over the past four decades in golf course management. He also offered some kind memories about our own O. J. Noer and emphasized the important role O. J. played in the golf course business for so many years.

Familiar names appear on the results of the golf event. Congratulations to the winners.

Championship Flight

1st low net 71 Pat Mertz
2nd Low Net 73 Bruce Worzella
3rd Low Net 75 Joe Fryman

A Flight

1st Low Net 67 Steve Blendell
2nd Low Net 69 Chad Ball
3rd Low Net 72 Bob Petsel

B Flight

1st Low Net 76 David Mergatroyd
2nd Low Net 77 Tom Schaller
3rd Low Net 78 Bob Belfield

Commercial Flight

1st Low Net 68 Ed Devinger
2nd Low Net 72 Gary Monfre
(Won Scorecard Playoff)
3rd Low Net 72 Roger Thomas

Closest To The Pin

#8 Gary Monfre
#12 Joe Kuta



Dr. Bill Daniel & Mr. Bill Allis at Milwaukee Country Club.

REINDERS ADDITION



Reinders Brothers of Elm Grove, Toro distributor for Wisconsin, is putting the finishing touches on the new addition to their facility. The addition, 34,000 square feet in size, will house a new repair shop, the parts department as well as additional office and conference space. It will also increase their warehouse capabilities.



September's speaker — Dr. Bill Daniel, Purdue University.