



From the Director's Desk

1985 — THE YEAR FOR THE GOLFER

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From mid-April to this writing — golfers in the Great Lakes Region have no cause to complain about the number of playing days this year. Club members' cost per round of golf could be at its lowest in years. Revenue on daily fee courses, on the other hand should be at its highest in years. Let's also include greatly increased revenue at all courses from golf car rentals, dining room and bar. In fact, everyone associated with golf around here should mark the 1985 season (so far) as a Vintage Year.

This might also be remembered as a great year to evaluate the effectiveness of irrigation systems. It is rather easy to spot the scallops along the edges of fairways and perhaps the doughnuts from inadequate or uneven water distribution. This season has also provided a great opportunity to locate areas of overapplication of water due to either misscheduling, poor system design or distribution pattern.

The season has also pointed out some strange seepage locations not detectable in 'normal years.' Some have been weak springs on hilltops. In other cases, areas which should have been drained a long time ago were easily located so that drainage installation can be made in the off season. Low water levels in streams and ponds have caused a few headaches from muddying up the equipment.

Perhaps the most frustrating experience of the irrigation year is a design which took into account the direction of the prevailing wind in the pipe layout. But the wind didn't blow during the irrigation cycles. **Great** roughs! It is also difficult for most of us to understand the elation of a superintendent to find an extra **one-fourth inch** of water in the irrigation ponds after a rain. (No well).

This has been a great year to maintain "a little" moisture stress on *Poa annua*, in the hope that bentgrass might compete.

Perhaps the most nagging prob-

lem in the Region has been localized dry spots. These things started with the warm winds of April and remain bothersome in some areas. Some of the backbenchers lay the total responsibility to sand topdressing and the waxy coating caused by "something." If that be true, how come the old soil below the sand still won't take water after aeration, wetting agents and flooding? I'm afraid the problem goes much deeper. Certainly the dryness does. You might also take a look at the shape of the dry spots in the early morning dew or at sundown. The C shapes indicate the presence of microorganisms not unlike fairy ring fungi. Could we have done something to screw up the population balance of soil organisms? How? Inadequate or imbalanced fertility? Unknown activity by organic fungicides? Whatever the cause, the nature of the dry spots remind us **again** that the turf surfaces we see are only the result of soil processes and a quick fix out of a bottle doesn't really cope with an underlying problem in the root zone.

The most talked about non-turf problem this year is the quality and care of sand bunkers. Earnest and vigorous comments and complaints are common throughout the region. The sand is either too fluffy, too heavy, too coarse, too fine, too something. It seems that the golf course superintendent will take all the gaff until someone or some committee commits themselves to a stated style of playability, deep and loose or shallow and hard.

Under most situations, the sand itself is of secondary importance. The overall maintenance operation determines the play of the bunker. This involves the depth of penetration made by the equipment, wet or dry raking, and other operational factors. Several of these are determined by the architectural features of the bunker and their location on the course. The basic problem is the lack of agreement by the golfers on just how they want the bunkers to play and, as usual, the superintendent is caught in the middle. But isn't it nice that golfers have sand quality and not turf quality to complain about?

Toronto bent is still a problem to some

folks and comes in all sizes. And yet many golf courses still have magnificent Toronto greens for their play and management style. The decline problem is well known, but just try to spend big bucks to replace a fine putting surface! A bad surface is something else and contingency plans are prepared for when, not if, needed. The funding is another thing.

The other exotic diseases with the strange sounding names have been around, but not in epidemic proportions. Preventive fungicide programs have apparently worked as well as the curative programs. Panic purchases of fungicides have been rare, not necessarily as a result of good planning, just low disease pressure so far.

Bug chasers have been rather busy this year — from the grasshoppers in Montana to the cutworms in this area. After all, these things aren't dumb. Why lay eggs in a dried up corn patch when a lush, tasty, well irrigated golf course is in the neighborhood?

The old-timers have a phrase for 1985: A Great Clover Year. Maybe part of this is due to the inability or justifiable reluctance to spray herbicides last spring. Some credit should be given to clover's deep root system, giving it the ability to grow well under the moisture stress early in the season.

And finally, a word to the wise. If your lightweight mowing of fairways is producing great spread of bentgrass into *Poa annua* colonies, watch out. The floating mowers are riding up and over the growth, helping to produce some of the fluffiest turf you ever saw. Now is the time to begin a strong thatch **prevention** program. With the acreage involved this is surely a good example of an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure.

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