



Rain, Rain (Go Away?!)

By Monroe S. Miller

It was a singular event — one of the players at our club was grouching and griping, and I was loving it.

We've placed metal yardage tags on the Toro sprinkler heads on both sides of our fairways. It's been a great thing for members — we were generous in the number of heads labeled like this. It's also a great service provided by Paul Becker and the WGCSA; he measured all the yardage with his laser equipment.

Anyway, the member was grumbling that these 650 series heads were so grown over with grass that the yardage tags were, in some cases, obscured.

They were obscured, of course, from lack of use; water pressure from each head keeps it trimmed free of turf quite nicely.

And they weren't being used because we've been receiving such generous rainfall! Beautiful, timely, wonderful, cool rain. Green paint from the sky; green gold for golf courses. Grown-over sprinkler heads are an easy problem to deal with when you consider the alternatives we've had for the past two years.

In fact, I couldn't believe my ears at the May WGCSA meeting when I heard a colleague complaining about "all the damn rain." There's a true ingrate; if I'd had a shovel I would have smacked him along side of his head with it. I've vowed not to ever again cry about too much rain.

On the weekend before the meeting I had visited with my dad, and he remarked how some of the farmers in his area were carping about the rain. He couldn't believe it, either. We concluded that some people must have been put on this earth primarily to complain.

Griping about ample moisture is even more incredible when viewed with the fact that the year started out so dry and warm. In fact, the federal Climate Analysis Center reported that the first three months of the new decade represented the second warmest start for a year since they began keep-

ing such records way back in 1895. Only 1921 was warmer during the first three months of the year.

So as far as this golf course manager is concerned, it can keep on raining; you won't hear a peep from me. And this despite some disease problems Dr. Worf can tell you about.

A report, called the "Green Index", released this past spring by the Durham, North Carolina-based Institute for Southern Studies ranked Wisconsin sixth on an environmental scorecard of the 50 states.

The report examined 35 indicators of pollution, public health and environmental safety. As in so many other independent surveys, our state came out on or very near the top. These kinds of reports make the constant haranguing from the granola bar types ring a little hollow.

Wisconsin is doing quite well in the "environmental responsibility" department. So are her golf courses.

There's a new secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. He's Alan Tracy, a Janesville native. Tracy had been serving as Secretary Howard Richards' executive assistant.

He brings good experience to the job. In addition to his native son status and his two years at WDATCP, Tracy's managed a seed farm near Janesville, served as an associate administrator of Foreign Agriculture in the USDA, and was a deputy assistant secretary for commodity programs, also in the USDA.

Tracy has named Joseph Tregoning as his executive assistant. Tregoning was a dairy farmer until 1967 when he left farming and was elected to the Wisconsin legislature. He has served on the Wisconsin Assembly Agriculture Committee since his first election.

Imagine that — in this day and age, a secretary of agriculture who knows

something about agriculture. I think he is going to be a good choice. The same can be said for Tregoning. It is certain Tracy has a large pair of shoes to fill. Howard Richards, his predecessor, did a good job in managing the state agency that has so much influence on our profession. Richards knew a lot about Wisconsin agriculture.

The state of Wisconsin, in mid- and late-May, used insecticides as part of its program to control the gypsy moth problem on Lake Michigan's scenic Door County peninsula. These moths have a tremendous appetite for tree leaves. The legislature, via the joint finance committee, approved \$286,000 for insecticide applications in Door and Kewaunee counties. The money also will be used for WDATCP tests and surveys for the moth in other counties.

Like some other golf courses in the WGCSA, we've had gypsy moth traps on our course every year for quite a few years. We've never trapped a moth. This is one time I don't mind being shut out.

Let's all hope these efforts to control the gypsy moth invasion work. I'd hate to see them get the upper hand.

David Fearis is the golf course superintendent at the Blue Hills Country Club in Kansas City. Many WGCSA members know him from the GCSAA and its activities. Others may have met him at the Badger chapter CMAA turf management seminar he presented at West Bend Country Club this past spring.

I know David as the editor of *Heart Beat*, the newsletter of Heart of America Golf Course Superintendents Association. In the May issue of *Heart Beat*, he gave his members a preview of the 1991 GCSAA conference. He gave me permission to share it with *The Grass Roots'* readers.

So, some July or August evening when you are wondering if you or your

golf course can hang in there for another day, sit down and read what's ahead in six months.



1991 GCSAA Conference — A Preview

By Dave Fearis

On April 16 and 17, as a member of the GCSAA Education Committee, I visited Las Vegas — the site of the 1991 GCSAA International Conference and Show. This was my first visit to Las Vegas or "Lost Wages" as some call it. When the conference was there in 1984, I was working for Scotts. So, for you "veterans" who have frequented the slots, the tables, the shows, etc., many of my comments might be "old hat".

I might add that I am not much of a gambler. When I walked into the Riviera to check in, and then through the casino to my room, I was totally overwhelmed. I wasn't sure that I would like this atmosphere with all its glitter, glamor and fast pace. However, I soon adjusted and succumbed to the "clinking" of coins in the slot machines and the urge to win at the crap and blackjack tables. I'm ready to go back to Vegas February 6-13, 1991!

The first thing that I want to emphasize is that Las Vegas has exploded since your last visit in 1984. In 1984, Vegas was "giving away" items like room rates, meals, etc. Not so now, prices have risen, but all in all, Las Vegas is still a good bargain.

Airport

The airport has tripled in size since 1984. It still is a convenient airport as far as deplaning and retrieving your luggage. Security does check your luggage tickets, so don't lose them!

I noticed that Hertz, Avis and Dollar car rentals all have buses to pick you up at the airport. Their parking lots were very close. Alamo was a little further from the airport, but closer to town. "The Strip" is only 10-15 min-

utes from the airport, which translates into about a \$10 taxi fare.

Hotels

In Orlando, we had a lot of hotels with a small number of allotted rooms per hotel. In Vegas, GCSAA will have eight hotels with a large block of rooms in many of them. Before I describe the hotels, there is one very important point that needs to be emphasized. **Almost no hotels will allow Saturday check-in or check-out.** Vegas gets thousands and thousands of weekend gamblers. Therefore, if you don't have a room before Saturday, you're not going to get one until Monday morning — NO EXCEPTIONS!

All of the hotels, except the Las Vegas Hilton, are too far from the convention center to comfortably walk to. I stayed in the Riviera, which will be the headquarters hotel, and was in the casinos of the Mirage and Caesar's Palace. All the rest I was in a "drive by". I'll list them from most expensive in room rates to least expensive (rates are approximate).

Caesar's Palace: Allocated 400 rooms; \$105-\$115. If the rooms are anything like the entrance and the casino, they will be magnificent. A people mover (escalator) carries you at least 300 yards into the casino from the outside. When the Mirage was opened last year, Caesar's responded by spending \$1 million per suite on remodeling. Caesar's caters to the elite of Vegas.

The Mirage: 500 allocated rooms; \$95. I have never seen any hotel like it. After a construction cost of \$700 million, the Mirage opened last fall. There is a "forest" of specimen palm trees, costing on the average of \$5,000 per tree, greeting you as you enter the Mirage. The landscaping budget was in the \$2 million range. A volcano, located outside across from the lobby entrance, erupts every 15 minutes, starting at 7:30 p.m., weather permitting. Behind the registration desk is a huge aquarium with sharks swimming around in it. Also found in the Mirage complex is a large glass exhibit housing some white tigers.

Las Vegas Hilton: 500 allocated rooms; \$89. The only hotel within a short walk of the convention center. From the outside, it looks like a very attractive hotel.

Bally's: 1,000 allocated rooms; \$82. The 1984 headquarters hotel, formerly known as MGM Grand. Furthest from the convention center, but well recommended.

Flamingo Hilton: 500 allocated rooms; \$80. Like its counterpart, the Las Vegas Hilton, is attractive in appearance.

Holiday Inn: 300 allocated rooms; \$79. Described by one of the Education Committee members who stayed there in late February, "a much better quality Holiday Inn than most."

Riviera: 1,500 allocated rooms; \$72. Headquarters hotel; 15-20 minutes walking distance from the convention center. The Riviera has the world's largest casino, seven restaurants and everything else you can imagine. The rooms are spacious and clean.

Imperial Palace: 300 allocated rooms; \$55. The outside looks like a Chinese Imperial Palace. I heard some good and some bad comments about the quality of the rooms.

Food and Entertainment

You name it, Vegas has it! Let me just give you an example of what the Riviera has to offer. In restaurants, you could spend in the area of \$50-\$75 per person in Delmonico's for a fine French cuisine dinner, or \$2.50 for a Whopper at Burger King. The Riviera offers four shows. One called "Splash" has been voted the "best show in Las Vegas". It is a unique aquacade extravaganza costing \$22.50 per person, which includes two drinks. The other three shows cost \$9.95 per person, which also includes two drinks. A couple of us saw a show called "Crazy Girls — Fantasie de Paris". All I can say is that I have never seen 12 girls who are better looking and in better shape assembled in one place at any one time.

All the hotels offer excellent food and entertainment. The "big name" entertainers command big prices, so you might pay in the range of \$80-\$100 per person to see them. However, at the same time, you can see entertainers like Redd Foxx for \$14.95. There is a wide price range.

If you are a novice gambler, get a book explaining all the games before you go to Vegas. The best odds are craps, but it moves so fast and there are so many different bets that I found it intimidating. I played blackjack for about two hours and actually ended up winning the huge sum of \$20. One of the dealers was a golfer and was very friendly and helpful. Most of the blackjack tables at the main casinos are \$5 minimum bets. So, that's all I bet each hand. While I was playing blackjack, a gentleman sat down next to me, bought \$100 worth of chips and pro-

ceeded to bet \$50 per hand. He was gone in less than five minutes. While I was playing craps, some guy laid out at least \$5,000 in hundred-dollar-bills. I was gone in less than five minutes.

The slots are the worst odds. I noticed \$25, \$5, \$1, quarter and nickel slots. I made the initial mistake of playing the \$1 slots. I lost five dollars in a sneeze. So, the rest of the time, I played the quarter slots and did much better.

One last observation concerning Vegas. In my opinion, Vegas is adult entertainment and certainly not a place to bring your children.

Education

Now, let's get into the **real** purpose of my trip to Las Vegas — education. The first thing to note is that, normally, our conference starts on a Monday with seminars. The opening session is usually on a Thursday, with the trade show starting on Saturday. On the following Monday, the annual meeting and banquet are held. Well, in Las Vegas, everything starts a day later:

- February 6, Tuesday — Seminars in the Riviera
- February 7, Wednesday — Seminars in the Riviera
- February 8, Thursday — Seminars in the Riviera and Caesar's
- February 9, Friday — Seminars in the Riviera and Caesar's and opening session in the Riviera
- February 10, Saturday — Three educational sessions in the morning; three educational sessions in the afternoon; Distributor day for the show
- February 11, Sunday — Trade opens; no educational sessions
- February 12, Monday — Trade show continues; Golf Course Builders in the morning; Golf Course Architects in the afternoon; Major Speaker in the morning; Two Symposiums in the afternoon; Governmental Relations Forum; Computer Special Interest Group
- February 13, Tuesday — Trade show until 1 p.m.; USGA Green Section at 9 a.m.; Annual Meeting at the Convention Center; Banquet in the Riviera

The educational session themes will center on Golf Course Techniques I and II, which will include public golf topics, Southern Turf, Environmental Benefits of Golf Courses, Legal Aspects of Underground Storage Tanks and Labor on a Golf Course — hiring, firing, sources, etc. The USGA Green Section could center on public golf.

There is a 50/50 chance that Mr. William Reily, head of the EPA, could be the keynote speaker at the opening session.

Please note that all the seminars will be held in the Riviera or Caesar's. Both have excellent facilities. Also, note that the golf tournament will still be held on Monday, February 5 and on Tuesday, February 6.

Environmental Management Program (EMP)

This doesn't directly relate to the conference in Vegas, but you will be seeing this educational program strongly emphasized this year, so I thought that I would mention it. The EMP consists of five distinct specializations certificate programs — Integrated Pest Management, Employee Safety and Right to Know, Storage Disposal and Recycling, UST, and Water Quality and Application. A potential specialist will choose to complete one or more of the programs of study. The first programs to be implemented this year will be IPM and UST. Coursework for EMP will be conducted by whatever method is most efficient and effective for the given subject. Thus, it might be a correspondence course, videotape or a seminar. Obviously, there are a lot more details which pertain to this program. You certainly will get all these in the near future.



Gambling #1

There is a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work which takes place by the GCSAA staff in putting together the annual conference and show. For example, this 1991 Las Vegas site was booked clear back in 1984 when we were there before. "Booked" is the word to mention versus "contract". Because of our size, there are only six to seven cities large enough to accommodate us. Thus, there are numerous other conventions competing for dates and sites. The amazing

fact is that because of legalities and other circumstances, the actual contract for the 1991 conference and show was not signed until the afternoon of April 17, 1990. Las Vegas cares about one thing — gambling. It could care less about educational conferences, especially if they are in town on the weekends. So, the Las Vegas Convention Bureau has been giving the GCSAA staff fits. They don't like you there on the weekends; there is another convention sharing the center when we are there; construction at the center is scheduled to be going on while we are there, etc. All these factors contributed to our conference being moved back a day.

Convention Center

A spacious one million square-foot facility. You ask if it is so big, why are they going to be under construction? The reason being is that the rotunda area is obsolete and will be converted into more exhibit space. This is why we will not have any seminars in the convention center. The construction will affect the area where the seminars would have been held. However, the educational sessions are in a different part of the center and will not be affected by the construction. We will be sharing the exhibit space with another convention — the Divers' Convention. They come every year to Vegas. Thus, our total exhibit space will be approximately 10,000 square feet less than that in Orlando.

Spouse Program

Tentative, as is all the information presented thus far, but subjects like "How to Gamble", "Behind the Scenes of a Las Vegas Show" (I want to see that one), and tours to Hoover Dam are being planned. Watch out, guys, because I saw a shopping mall on "The Strip" with Saks Fifth Avenue, Nieman Marcus and Dillards — \$\$\$\$\$.

Shuttle Buses

Shuttle buses will run every 15 minutes between the various hotels (Imperial Palace will board at the Holiday Inn). However, because of the large number of persons staying at hotels like the Riviera and Bally's, buses will run direct from these hotels to the convention center.

Although it might sound like a real mess right now, I can assure you that the 1991 GCSAA International Conference and Show will be a great success. Why? Because of the hard work and dedication of the GCSAA staff.