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# My "BESTS" and "WORSTS" for the Decade Past

By Monroe S. Miller

Now that everyone else — newspapers, magazines, newscasts — is done with their "lists" of the decade of the 1980s, the time seems right for one of our own. Actually, that's not accurate. Since it is almost completely subjective, this list is merely one golf course superintendent's look back at the best and worst, most and last, and other miscellany from the past ten years in our business of managing golf courses in Wisconsin.

**BIGGEST STORY IN WISCONSIN GOLF IN THE LAST TEN YEARS:** Andy North wins his second U.S. Open. When the 1985 Open at Oakland Hills C.C. was over, North had the low score. I cannot imagine anyone offering up much of an argument here. North is a native Wisconsinite who grew up at the Nakoma Golf Club. He is still a member there and has served on Randy Smith's Green Committee.

This was an easy choice.

**MOST FAMOUS GOLFER TO PLAY A WISCONSIN GOLF COURSE IN THE 1980s:** Arnold Palmer travelled to Stevens Point for a round of golf at SentryWorld on August 27, 1985. Some would argue that Nicklaus and Norman et.al., who've played the GMO merit consideration. True enough. But Arnie still wins this one.

**MOST HISTORICAL EVENT OF THE DECADE FOR THE WGCSA:** O.J. Noer becomes the first non-golfer in the Wisconsin Golf Hall of Fame. His nomination was advanced by the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association. He was the only one selected in 1985.

**GREATEST PROFESSIONAL HONOR EXTENDED TO A WGCSA MEMBER DURING THE 1980s:** Dr. James R. Love, University of Wisconsin-Madison professor and founder of the University's turfgrass management program, is presented the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's Distinguished Service Award at the 1987 Conference in Phoenix.

**BEST WISCONSIN GOLF TURF**

**SYMPOSIUM:** Here's a tough call to make because there have been so many excellent ones. But, for me, the 1983 Symposium on *Poa annua* management was the best of ten very good meetings.

**MOST FAMOUS LUNCHEON SPEAKER AT THE SYMPOSIUM:** Frank Hannigan, executive director of the USGA at the time (1984) gets my vote. Andy North's gracious and generous visit in 1985 merits a close second, however.

**BEST KNOWN LECTURER AT A 1980s SYMPOSIUM:** Dr. James B. Beard in 1986.

**GOLF COURSE AREA EXPERIENCING GREATEST IMPROVEMENT OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS:** Fairways. They are cut closer, are more healthy and play a whole lot better in 1989 than we ever imagined would be possible in 1980.

**BEST NEW FUNGICIDE FROM THE 80s:** The group known as sterol inhibitors (Rubigan, Bayleton, Banner). They've had a tremendous impact in providing the better fairways golfers are enjoying these days.

**BEST NEW EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE IN THE LAST TEN YEARS:** The various and numerous pieces of lightweight fairway mowing equipment.

**WORST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT INTRODUCED IN THE PAST DECADE:** The competition here is fierce; it's hard to believe, as I look back, at how many pieces of bad machinery have been introduced into our marketplace. My vote, after careful consideration based on my own experience, goes to the Cushman Eagle utility vehicle. That was a dog in every sense of the word.

**WORST NON-EQUIPMENT PRODUCT INTRODUCED IN THE 1980s (or, stated another way, WIERDEST PRODUCT OF THE 1980s):** Lots to choose from here, too — blue dye for your pond, green dye for your grass, seaweed extract for your greens. But the winner, chosen by a guy who grew

up on a Wisconsin dairy farm, is the cow manure product, neatly bottled for sale to golf courses. The stuff sounds like the liquid that ran out of the downhill side of our John Deere manure spreader.

Gee, if I'd only known — a fortune ran out of our spreader and over the hillsides. Sort of reminds me of that old Pat and Mike joke... oh, never mind!

**WORST YEAR FOR GROWING GOLF TURF IN THE 80s:** The drought year of 1988, followed closely by winter damaged 1989 and winter damaged 1986.

**BEST YEAR FOR GROWING GOLF TURF IN THE 80s:** 1984, followed by another fairly gentle year in 1985.

**BEST MONTHLY WGCSA MEETING IN THE 1980s:** The May 23, 1988 meeting at Sheboygan Pine Hills Country Club. The elegance of the recently remodelled clubhouse, the great golf course which was hosting the state amateur that year, and our speaker. USGA Green Section Director Bill Bengueyfield combined with the setting to provide a most memorable meeting. Oh yes, Pete Dye and Herb Kohler were there, too!

Other meetings memorable to this reporter include Dr. Bill Daniels at the Milwaukee Country Club in September of 1984 and Dr. Dave Roberts at Quit Qui Oc in June of 1984.

**BEST ISSUE OF THE GRASS ROOTS:** The November/December 1984 issue is my all-time favorite, primarily because it was the "Special Heritage Issue".

**BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO THE WGCSA IN THE 1980s:** Gene Haas and the WSGA agree to provide us with an office, guidance and a permanent address. It has been tremendous for us in every way.

**BIGGEST SURPRISE IN WISCONSIN GOLF IN THE PAST DECADE:** After an eternity of talking about it, the UW-Madison actually begins construction of its own golf course. It reaffirmed one's belief in miracles.