

Anticipation, Participation, Excitement

By Monroe S. Miller

These days the ceiling of our office is as high as the sky and the walls stretch to the very boundaries of the golf course itself. There are a thousand things that make the spring season on a golf course so special and such fun.

Golf course superintendents throughout the cool season regions of America see the new golf season as a time of anticipation. Haven't you spent months planning, organizing and preparing for what we all expect will be our very best year ever?

Despite the fact I am crowding middle age pretty hard, a lot of the fun I'm having is a result of taking an active role in the actual work on the course. Some is really necessary because the students aren't done with the semester yet. Every warm body helps.

It's easier to help with the work now because these are such great growing days—deep grass roots, moderate daytime temperatures and cool nights. You can mow and plant and cultivate and fertilize, the very things that interested you in this business in the first place.

You've got to savor it all because soon this kind of participation will be impossible and you will have to let go until autumn.

The excitement of this golf season started early for me, about the time in March when I pretty much knew the golf course had overwintered as well as it ever had. It was exciting to see players again on opening day, to watch mowing patterns evolve and to move all 18 holes into mid-season form so early.

Maybe best of all was having Vincent at work everyday. The golf season doesn't really get underway until he's at work again.

The spring season is one when we are especially interested in Wisconsin's soil conditions. Things like frost depth, moisture content and soil temperatures influence early planning for the golf season.

A lot of what we know is reported to us and the rest of the public by statisticians in the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Where do they get their information? For the past 29 years, Wisconsin's grave diggers have been reporting soil conditions to the DATCP.

Grave diggers from all over the state check in with the stat people in the Ag Department and give data on snow depths, frost depths, moisture, etc. The reports are biweekly from December through March. They fill out index cards that even call for information like the necessity of heating soils before digging.

Wisconsin is one of very few states that make use of the tremendous information given by the grave diggers. Their reporting is a great resource for all agriculturalists, including golf course superintendents.

Tree planting is one of the great tasks of spring. While we were waiting for a meeting to begin last month, one of our Club directors and I were lamenting the loss of all the American elms on our golf course ten to twenty years ago. Tree planting has dampened their loss somewhat.

The Regal, the Sapiro Gold and the American Liberty elms we have planted on our golf course are not yet large enough to judge how well they'll replace the American elm. At least we have them to plant.

Well, soon there will be two more elms to choose from. These new cultivars are resistant to Dutch elm disease and are slowly working their way toward the market and wide availability. Both were developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"New Horizon" is the most disease resistant elm of the university's selections. It is a vigorous elm that has a full crown, grows well and tolerates harsh conditions. It inherits large, dark green leaves from its maternal parent, the Japanese elm. Its upright form and

disease resistance come from its paternal parent, the Siberian elm.

The other new elm has been christened "Cathedral". It shares the same parents as "New Horizon" only in reversed order. The mother is the Siberian elm and the father is the Japanese elm. "Cathedral" is a little more spreading than "New Horizon" and not quite as hardy.

Both of these cultivars are currently in production and await patents. The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) applied for those patents late last year.

He really did it this time. Rob Schultz, GRASS ROOTS columnist who is also a sports writer for *The Capital Times*, has won a first-place award in the national contest of the Associated Press Sports Editors.

Rob received the top honor in enterprise reporting for papers with a 50,000 circulation for his six part series "The Student/Athlete: Torn Between Two Masters."

The series was published last May. He examined curriculums, admissions and graduation rates in Big Ten schools. He uncovered many reasons why Michigan and Iowa, for example, have better basketball and football teams than Wisconsin and Northwestern (gravy majors, easy admissions, no classes!).

The series was a classic example of Schultz and his work—detailed, thorough, in-depth and extremely well written. He left no stones unturned in his award winning work.

As you have read in years past, Rob has always finished high in this annual contest. This was his first first-place win, however. I'll bet it won't be his last, either.

Congratulations to a talented gentleman.

I couldn't believe the words before me as I read a letter the GCSAA's Pat

Jones sent to chapter presidents, government relations liaisons and newsletter editors.

The subject was "product warning". GCSAA learned that DuPont has issued an immediate recall of all Benlate 50 DF, Benlate 1991 DF and Tersan 1991 DF brand fungicides. The warning said these products should NOT be used or sold. Any golf course superintendents with any of these products should return them to the place of purchase for full credit.

DuPont believes the products may have been contaminated with low levels of atrazine and could therefore injure turfgrass or other plants. The company plans to keep the products out of our marketplace until it can verify their purity. If you have any questions, call DuPont at 800-441-7515.

DuPont plans to notify all customers who have purchased their benomyl fungicides of this problem. I won't wait until then, however. The stuff is coming off my shelf right now.

When I first started working on a golf course many years ago, Peter Miller taught all of us the importance of courtesy and the art of doing our work in a way that would distract players the very least.

One quickly learned of the reasons why a low profile is important. There are, of course, the serious and competitive players who are focusing on their game and score.

There are people on the course who have busy and active lives and want complete peace and quiet. Others

might be involved in side games, sometimes for sums greater than nickels and dimes and quarters. Those cats REALLY don't want to be disturbed.

And then there are those folks on the golf course—your golf course—to do business. There are more business deals cut and more decisions made on the course than any of us may realize.

So much so that a gentleman named Peter T. Braun has been giving seminars on "Powergolf—the game of cutting deals on the links".

A sampling of his lessons goes like this:

- don't fling that five iron; it might cost you a sale.
- if your prospective client refuses to take a penalty stroke for losing a ball in the rough, let him. But remember the guy is a cheat.

"Golf is not just a game—it's a business strategy," says Braun. His seminars are aimed at corporate executives new to the game.

"We believe that knowledge of the rules and etiquette of golf are just as much good solid business tools as any negotiating skills that a person might have."

Powergolf divides 18 holes of business golf into three parts:

- The first six holes establish a foundation for a relationship;
- The second six build rapport;
- The final six strike an alliance that could lead to a sale or a choice assignment.

"We don't emphasize trying to close deals on the golf course. The only thing you want to close is the date of the next

meeting, the chance to show your product and continue the relationship," Braun said.

The National Golf Foundation says the number of U.S. golfers more than doubled, from 11.2 million in 1970 to 24.7 million in 1989, and that nearly 12 percent of them play for business reasons.

Braun's program helps those previously unable to participate in golf outings, for example. He wants to reach novice golfers whose lack of knowledge about the game could undermine their ability to make an effective sales pitch or appear breezily confident while strolling down the fairway with a couple of potential clients and the boss.

"Understanding the proper timing and proper ways to address business issues is going to increase their confidence and comfort," Braun says. He reviews the game's rules and lessons on how to size up people as business associates as they line up their putts.

Players who don't repair their ball marks or replace divots probably won't attend to business details, according to Braun. And those who hit out of turn may not be team players.

He charges handsomely for his seminars, charging \$199 for the basic one-day course to \$499 for a weekend package that includes golf lessons and an 18-hole round.

Many golf course superintendents understand all of these bits of advice very well. I wonder if Pete Braun needs an instructor. . . ?

I was able to attend some superb educational meetings this past winter. In addition to the national and our own WTA meetings, I attended the UMASS Conference and the USGA Green Section regional meeting.

As you probably know, the UMASS conference is organized and chaired by Dr. Joseph Troll. Even though he is retired, he remains active in our profession.

Dr. Troll was the 1991 recipient of the USGA Green Section Award. He was most deserving of this high honor. His acceptance speech at the GCSAA banquet was the best I've ever heard. What a story his career has been.

That part of the education season is well over. Many golf course superintendents and faculty from around the country's turf management programs are planning for this summer's round of field days.

Dr. Bruce Branham dropped me a

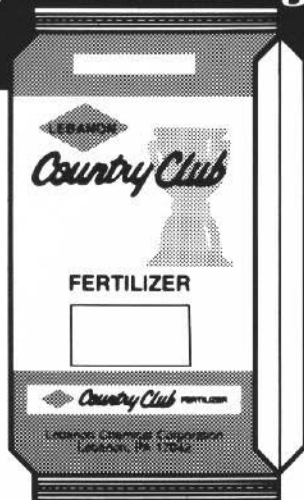
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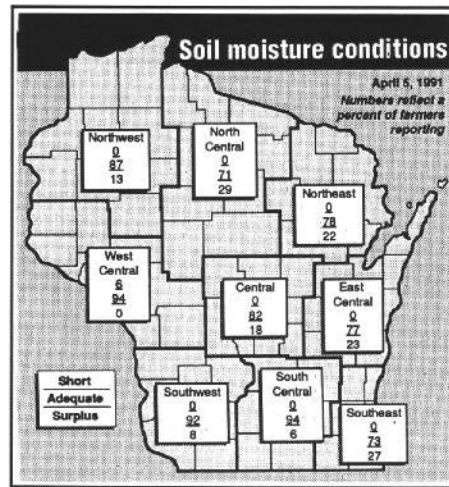
note and asked that we announce the Michigan State University Field Day for 1991 to GRASS ROOTS readers. It will be held on Thursday, August 22, 1991 at the Hancock Turfgrass Research Center on the MSU campus.

It's been both fun and interesting to watch the success and growth of Waupaca Sand as a part of our industry. From some sales of topdressing sand to Wisconsin golf course superintendents, they have grown to the point where they have opened a Pacific Rim Division.

Leading the way, in my opinion, has been Christine Faulks. The company named the part of the operation we deal with "Greensmix" and Christine has forged it into the country's leading rootzone mix blender. It is also the first company to set up custom blending in Guam.

Congratulations to all involved in the success of this Wisconsin family business.

The accompanying graphic, compiled from the Wisconsin Statisticians Service, clearly shows the complete reversal in soil moisture status from two years ago.



These statistics show the only place any soils are short of moisture is west

central Wisconsin. An even there only 6% are in the deficient category.

It will be very interesting to see the stats for the next period. One week after these numbers were recorded, we had 4.25" of rainfall at our golf course! That widespread precipitation across the whole state certainly sets the golf courses up for a good start to the season.

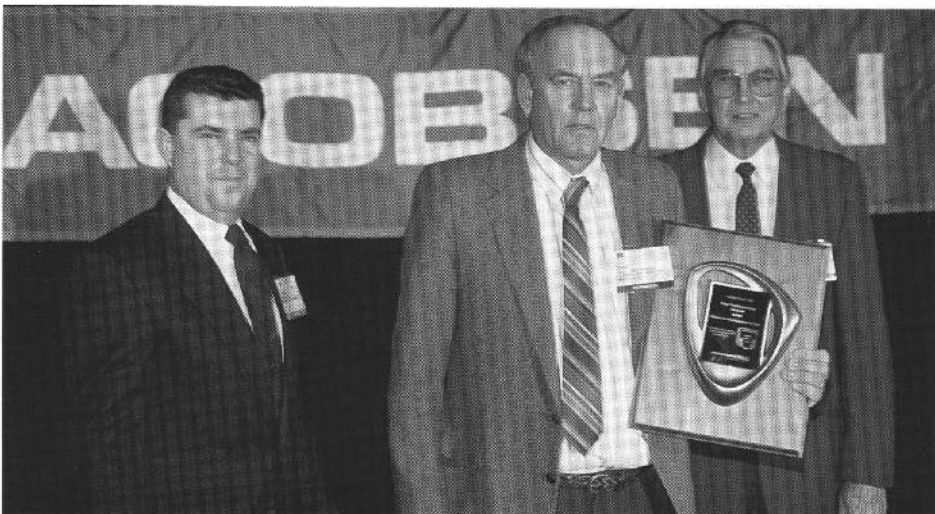
Our sympathy goes out to Danny Quast this spring as he grieves the loss of his daughter, Ann Quast-Pinter. Ann passed away on February 28, 1991 at the tender age of 21. She was diagnosed as having a rare form of leukemia.

It is impossible to say how much one can miss a daughter, especially when she is as close to her father as Ann was to Danny. We can only offer condolences, support and understanding.

Jacobsen Names Wisconsin Turf Top Performer

Jacobsen Division of Textron honored Wisconsin Turf Equipment Corp. in Janesville and New Berlin with the company's Top Performer Award. The award was presented to Wisconsin Turf President Dennis Christopherson during the Golf Course Conference

and Show in Las Vegas in February. Wisconsin Turf was selected from among the company's most successful North American distributors for its outstanding sales and service efforts in 1990.



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