



The Annual Editor's Awards, Including the Best and the Worst for 1992

By Monroe S. Miller

The end of another year is upon us. And what a year it was. I'll remember 1992 as a great year, for the most part, for golf courses and an average year at best for golf itself. The weather that was kind to golf courses during a lot of the season was uncomfortable for golf players.

But we deserve that. Too many years in recent times have been huge aberrations—excessive heat and drought during the summers and vicious cold during the winters. It was nice to have a "normal" year.

Normal years are uninteresting to some, not the kind that make for creative annual awards.

That may be. But I'll take the good weather and comfortable temperatures anytime. And we will still honor those highlights of the uninteresting season past.

Here goes.

BEST NEW AUTHOR AWARD: This prestigious award goes to two men—they tied in the voting. Pat Norton, with his column "The Public Golf Course Superintendent" and Dean Musbach, with "Life In The Northwoods" have added greatly to the quality and the diversity of *THE GRASS ROOTS*. Along with last year's winner of this award—Chad Eberhardt—Pat and Dean have expanded the dimensions of the WGCSA's award winning journal. Thanks to them, our official publication remains current, interesting and popular among the membership.

COUP OF THE YEAR AWARD: Easy—the University of Wisconsin's hiring of Dr. Frank S. Rossi from Michigan State University. We will profit from this success for decades to come.

JOKE OF THE YEAR AWARD: Q: How many grass machinery engineers does it take to grease a fairway mower? A: One, if you run him through reeal slow!

SLOW PLAY AWARD: Goes to the impatient player in Levittown, Pennsyl-

vania who was in a foursome following a particularly slow group of inexperienced players.

His group thought they were invited to play through when they reached a par-3 hole. But when they reached the green, one of the slow players grabbed the impatient player and threatened him.

Threats don't mean much when you're packing a rod. Our slow play award winner was ready—he pulled out a .38 caliber pistol! He had a license to carry it and no shots were fired, despite the fact he put the weapon to the slow player's head.

SALES PITCH OF THE YEAR AWARD: "Right after you apply the plant growth regulator to your fairways to retard their growth, be sure to fertilize." I know, I know. There is science behind the recommendation. Nevertheless, it has to be a dream come true for a sales representative who handles a line of PGRs and a line of fertilizer to have a customer express interest in this kind of program. Sort of reminds me of the pitch for the turf groomer—"you aren't supposed to see what a groomer does. Trust me—it will really improve your greens."

"WHAT ARE WE TO BELIEVE" AWARD: Presented to the USGA. The Green Section Staff does a superb job—during agronomist visits, in the *RECORD*, in articles written for chapter publications and from the speaker podium—of convincing golf players and wayward golf course superintendents of the absurdities of ultrafast greens and the deleterious effects such conditions have on turfgrass plants.

Why, then, did the USGA turn the putting greens at the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach into what looked like 18 research plots for Roundup?

The answer, obviously, was to make them ultrafast.

The contradiction is huge! The world's best players were somewhere between disgusted and outraged.

They claim the greens were NOT a true measure of golf skill, but rather a test of player luck.

USGA tournament officials appear unaware of what USGA Green Section Agronomists are telling golf course superintendents from one end of the country to the other.

Imagine—what would happen if the grass at the 1993 Master Tournament in Augusta looked like the grass on the greens at the 1992 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach?

That's a scary thought, until you realize it will NEVER happen. There's a lesson there.

SHOCKER OF THE YEAR AWARD: GCSAA's withdrawal of financial support from the USGA's golf turf research program. Few of us were expecting it.

FLATTERY AWARD: Goes to the *Milwaukee Journal* for the excellent article they included on the front page of the sports section of the August 27, 1992 edition. The story featured Pat Shaw and dealt with our profession as much as it did with Pat. We should all have felt as good as Pat must have.

WISCONSIN SPORTS HEROINE OF THE YEAR AWARD: Easy choice—Sherri Steinhauer. Wisconsin born and Nakoma GC member Steinhauer won her first LPGA tournament in Winnipeg, Manitoba on August 16th.

Many are betting she will be winning some more major tourneys in the near future.

ROCK BOTTOM WEATHER REPORT AWARD: It came on the first day of summer when forecasters were calling for frost. It was ugly seeing frost on rough grasses suffering from drought at that time.

The rains during the week of September 14th came in a close second and the Washara county tornado was third.

INSECT PROBLEM OF THE YEAR: This is a tough call because it wasn't
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that bad of a season for bugs. I heard most of my colleagues, at one time or another, complain about earthworm casts. Despite the good these creatures do, they can make a mess of golf course features. So what the heck, let's give them the prize for 1992.

DISEASE PROBLEM OF THE YEAR: Again, not a year of real disease pressure, except for one exception. Dollar spot. Some courses had infection from this disease like never before, and it drove them crazy. So we'll call this the "year of dollar spot". Beats the "year of pythium", though.

PHONEY BALONEY AWARD: Goes to those golf course superintendents who claim FULL credit for the excellent golf course conditions around Wisconsin this summer past.

Face it—we received a lot of help from the "Big Guy" in 1992. He evened the years out with this one.

But we had it coming, quite frankly.

BEST GOLF COURSE QUOTE FOR 1992: By Brendan Gill in the August 1992 issue of *ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST*: "Golf courses are among the most pleasing objects that man has fashioned out of nature—in the arts jargon of our day, they are sculptural earthworks that happen also to function well in ecological terms, shielding from the gross asphalt intrusions of suburbia several million acres of grass, trees, ponds, streams and wetlands.

BEST FREE PR: Marsh Finner, director of the UW-Madison Agricultural Research Stations gets credit for this.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation includes the location of every

UW research station on all official state maps that they distribute (for free, by the way, by the tens of thousands). Marsh made sure the new version of Wisconsin's state map included the NOER facility!

BEST ELECTION NEWS: The best news from the September primary election was State Senator Lou Fortis was given the boot by voters in Milwaukee's 4th Senate District. They apparently saw Fortis in the same light we've seen him for some time, now.

There is justice in the world after all!

BEST OTTOISM: The sage of our Association comes forth with many gems of wisdom and truth adages during the course of the season. Some you have to think about for a few days before you figure out what he means.

But he told the truth when he said "it was such a good year that you couldn't kill grass if you tried!"

BEST GRASS ROOTS ARTICLE: The honor of "best story" has never been given before and may never be awarded again. The judge is never impartial and there are too many good stories to single out one as "best". As I always say, all stories in our journal are winners.

Rob Schultz, Wayne Kussow, Gayle Worf and Lori Bocher are our best and most consistent writers. They cover the scene, the personalities and the sentiments of our profession. To note one story over all others is, in a sense, demeaning to those not chosen.

The exception comes this year. It is the result of the tremendous feedback from Lori's feature from the July/August issue entitled "Even his name shows his Love for life".

Professor Love's following is still formidable and scores of friends and former students were pleased to read about his life in retirement. In her story, Lori captured the essence of the man we've known so well for so long.

It was such a fine and memorable year that the staff has decided not to despoil it with any WORST awards. Seems fair enough. The 1992 season may well become the yardstick that measures golf seasons in the near future. It will be tough to match.

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