



# NOT AGAIN!

## —Winter Injury in the Great Lakes Region

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The 1992 season was almost too good to be true. Ample rainfall at well spaced intervals and minimal heat stress was the rule at most golf courses in the nine-state Great Lakes Region. It couldn't last, and it didn't. A "one-two punch" of severe freeze/thaw cycles and thick ice cover took its toll on *Poa annua* on greens and fairways at courses in Rockford, Janesville, Madison, the Fox River Valley, and the list goes on and on. As if the loss of turf from "crown hydration" wasn't enough, pink snow mold activity this spring added insult to injury.

The following is a summary of the more interesting observations I have made this spring regarding the winter related loss of turf. First, geotextile covers did not prevent loss of turf. By design most covers allow free movement of air and water across the fabric, so there is no reason to expect covers to protect turf during a severe freeze/thaw cycle. The thick excelsior blanket covers used on a few greens at Nakoma Golf Club provided a fair degree of protection from winter injury but at least four inches of snow were removed from the putting surface before the

greens were covered. Consequently a fair comparison of the amount of injury between greens cannot be made; in other words, was it the excelsior mat or the removal of snow that made the difference? The initial results are promising, but don't jump on the excelsior blanket bandwagon just yet. They are quite expensive, last about three to five years, and have unique handling and storage requirements.

Superintendents have come up with several ways to renovate and oversee the more severely injured areas. Good seed-to-soil contact is needed to ensure successful bentgrass germination and development. The use of shallow quadratine aeration or hand tillage with a "Garden Weasel" before overseeding has produced some good results at several courses. Grow-in time has been accelerated by pregerminating seed in the shop or by the use of the relatively new "primed" bentgrass seed. One device used at a number of courses was the "Gardenvator", a mini hand spiker. This garden cultivator caused very little disruption to a putting surface and is often used before and after the seed is applied. This tool

looks like a series of small "Ninja" stars (for those of us who remember the Kung Fu TV series) set on an 8-inch paint roller. Pushing the seed just a bit into the soil surface makes a big difference. I am sure there are similar devices used by others.

Some recovery occurred during the warm 10 day period of early May. Since then, cold nights with frost have just about shut down bentgrass growth and development. One of my most difficult challenges this spring has been making explanations to golfers regarding the limited growth of bentgrass during cool weather. In general, though, golfers have been very understanding, probably due to the widespread injury across Wisconsin and neighboring states. According to Jim Latham, Director of the Great Lakes Region, it seems that the area between Hayward, Green Bay, and Madison, referred to as the "Devil's Triangle", experienced some of the most severe injury in the state. The "Devil's Triangle—that must be where *Poa annua* enters and is sometimes never seen again.

Well, here's to summer and some warmer, sunnier weather! 🍷

### Answers to The Wisconsin Golf Course Quiz

1. Twenty-five years. This is the GMO's silver anniversary.
2. No. After three years at North Shore C.C.—1968, 1969 and 1970—the GMO moved to Tripoli C.C. After two years at Tripoli—1971 and 1972—the GMO moved to Tuckaway C.C. It has been there since then.
3. Jim Gallagher, Jr. The total of his earnings is \$228,565.40
4. Andy North ranks 68th on the career money list with earnings of \$31,439.21
5. Dave Stockton won in 1968 at North Shore C.C. with a score of 275. He went home with a \$40,000 purse.
6. Bill Kratzer finished with a 266 total (67,66,67,66) in 1980.
7. \$1,000,000.
8. All of them.
9. Dave Eichelberger has earned money in 18 GMOs, an amazing and impressive record.
10. The GMO is one of two community based tour stops. All of the others have a principal sponsor—Honda, Contel, etc.