



# The Season That Wasn't

By Monroe S. Miller

It's finally starting to dry out here in our city. We can even see Kentucky bluegrass showing dormancy in deep rough areas. That's a sign we wondered not long ago if we would ever see again.

It is almost criminal for anyone in most areas of Wisconsin to complain too much. After all, you could have been on a golf course or owned a farm or lived in a town along the Mississippi or Missouri or Des Moines Rivers the past two months. The tragedy for some of those people will last a lifetime; their suffering puts our misery into perspective.

That notwithstanding, the weather has foisted on us some of the worst conditions we will see in our careers. Many areas of Wisconsin were simply dealing with record amounts of rain—here in mid-August we are still 15 inches above normal in precipitation, crowding TWICE what we should have. It has gotten worse month by month—in mid-July we were only a dozen inches above normal in our town.

Amazing to most was how often it rained. Everyday, every other day, twice a week, every weekend. Endless clouds and wet conditions. Saturated soils. Unmowable grass—some areas on some of our Wisconsin golf courses didn't see any mowing equipment until some time in August.

There was more than just too much rain. Storms, especially in July, were devastating to areas of our state. The first week of July brought violent winds that took out 100 trees at the Edeiweiss Golf Club in New Glarus, 85 more at Janesville Riverside and a bunch at Monroe C.C. Each course here in Madison lost several.

At various times in July, you could find bluegill and carp and catfish and other species swimming golf course fairways somewhere. A sod farm not far from here had a 17-foot speedboat cruising one of its biggest fields, clarifying why we could not buy badly needed sod in August. Some golf course fairways were also under water—four and more feet of it. Rob Schultz, in the lead on the sports page in *The Capital Times* for July 10th, had the headline "Skip the golf cart, just use a canoe".



The 3rd hole at Oneida.

Details of individual courses don't matter too much, although I am including a photo Randy Witt sent me. It's a shot of Oneida's par 3 third hole—water from Duck Creek submerged the fairway and half the green. Most of us had similar photos and nightmare stories.

"Crisis" is the only word that could describe the disaster facing John Galus at Baraboo Country Club on the morning of July 18th. A storm the previous evening devastated the golf course, taking out acres of the course and big sections of his irrigation system. Reports on the actual amount of the rain torrent ranged from 8 to 12 inches.

Tons of silt covered acres of John's course, including putting greens. The aftermath had an up side—John reports they often had 75 or more members at any given time working to get the golf course back into play.

In a way, golf course superintendents may be the lucky ones in a natural disaster such as this. Our jobs are linked to the ups and downs of Wisconsin weather (it seems they've been mostly "downs" lately!) and we likely are psychologically more prepared to handle the elements without feeling too sorry for ourselves.

Residents are usually less affected by severe weather than those of us in agriculture. Not so with THIS weather. Flooded basements, soggy and closed parks, mosquito plagues, floating bogs on Lake Mendota, no sump pumps for sale anywhere and the prospect of higher food costs have all impacted our neighbors like seldom before.

Some golf courses, however, will suffer huge revenue losses because of so many no play days, exacerbating the dilemma of busted budgets resulting from repairs and renovations. Those hundreds of thousands of rounds won't be played this year, either.

Similarly, tourism all through Wisconsin has suffered. When some of our lakes are closed to boating for fear of wake damage, you know there will be problems for those who provide vacations. Devil's Lake park even had to be closed.

Last year Farm Progress Days closed barely after it opened because of heavy rains. This year, at least it stayed open, despite 30" year-to-date precip on the host farm near Fond du Lac.

For many WGCSA members, it was a season that left us feeling frustrated and unfulfilled. For golfers and golf course superintendents in many areas, it was a tragic loss of the summer of 1993. Rain fell like snow usually does in a blizzard; flash flooding washed out bunkers so many times that your employees thought golf courses had more sand than grass. This "season of discontent" was a matter of nature gone crazy; an overriding question many of us have is "why". In a way, I hope we never know.

Not all of our state suffered the torments of rain, however. Too much water dominated June and July in lots of places (causing \$1 billion in damage), but a northern area was actually dry with below normal rainfall.

From Wisconsin Rapids north, you could find some very dry conditions. The best evidence may be data from early August which show Wisconsin River flow at Eagle River in Vilas county at 79% of normal while downstream at Muscoda in Grant county the flow was 230% of normal! Park Falls, for example, received below normal rainfall in July (by 1"), and Wausau was 2" below July's normal. Madison, in contrast, received 10" of precipitation in July!

Many grizzled veterans (like I am slowly becoming) will remember the soaked season of 1993 as the one they wished for a very large sponge to dry out their golf courses. It will rank among the worst for some of us—remember the summer was preceded by a spring noted for winter kill, too cool temperatures and (yes) too much water way back then. Thoughts were

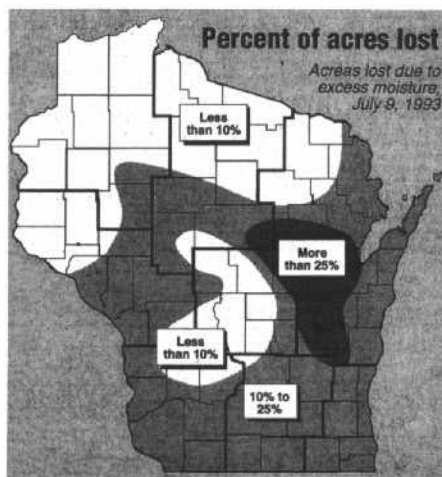
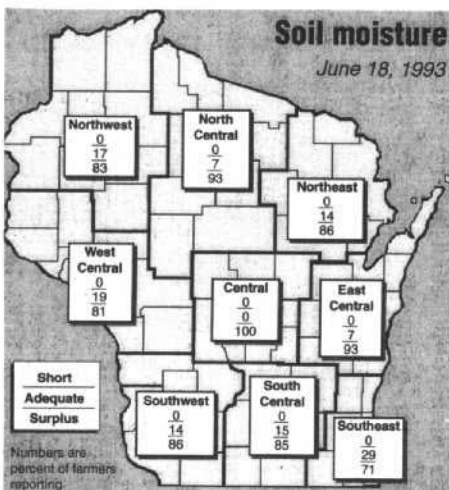
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more often on arks and umbrellas and 'red sky in the morning' than on mowing equipment and green speed. You could not buy a roll of sod in July.

Pray for a nice autumn. We have really earned it.

The accompanying graphics chart our weather problems in mid-summer, from data supplied by the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service and from the State Climatologist's office.



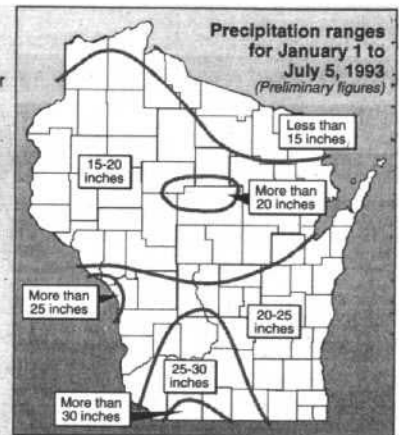
Finally. They've broken ground on the new \$29 million Biotechnology-Genetics Center on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. After a decade of planning, arguing and politicking, I am almost surprised it is really going to happen.

It will be a five-story building with 140,000 square feet of floor space. It will be built in the heart of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences campus on Henry Mall. The building will necessitate demolition of the old Wisconsin High School building which now houses the School of Social Work. The new building will bring together UW

## Drought to drenched

Precipitation so far this year exceeds most totals for the so-called drought year of 1989 and is nearing the normal totals for the whole year.

City/station	1993 year to date	Normal year to date	1989 total year	Normal total year
Beloit	28.80*	NA	22.94*	33.05*
Darlington	31.80	NA	24.49	34.27
Green Bay	20.71	13.35	20.42	28.83
La Crosse	29.13	14.50	23.06	30.55
Madison	25.81	14.53	23.39	30.88
Milwaukee	22.69	15.90	30.30	32.93
Neenah	22.38	NA	21.99	NA
Wisconsin Dells	27.27	NA	22.62	31.89



scientists who are now scattered in 25 laboratories from one end of campus to the other.

It should allow the UW to continue to recruit the best scientists and students and even more formidable research grants. The bright future of the Biotech Center bodes well for the future of all of Wisconsin.

Including the turfgrass industry. It may well be that biotechnology holds the key to some of our oldest and toughest problems.

There are already 158 firms with 10,000 employees doing research and related work in biotechnology in Wisconsin. The work ranges from pure science to legal services to instrument manufacture to marketing.

It was a difficult battle getting the facility here. The GCSAA conference a number of years ago—it may have been the Anaheim meeting before last year's—featured Rep. George Brown, D.—California, as a speaker. The old goat is on the House of Representatives "Science, Space and Technology" committee and had the nerve to "investigate" this year's \$2.1 million federal appropriation for the Center, calling it "academic pork". That, from a representative of a state that has received trillions of federal defense dollars over the years! Never dawned on the man, most likely, that the way out of our country's problems just might be progress in science. No wonder there is such widespread dislike of people in the public sector, especially the politicians.

Anyway, the building is going up and it represents a bright spot in Wisconsin's future.

The Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention has issued exercise guidelines that were probably made for golf course superintendents. With a definite break from the past, new research indicates that modest intermittent exercise during a day, doing

the kinds of things most of us do routinely, is almost as much good for you as one heartpounding non-stop workout in Gold's Gym.

I knew there were good reasons why I always laughed at joggers and fitness club fanatics.

Physicians are now claiming that you don't need to be an athlete in order to get the health benefits of physical activity.

Mow a green, lay some sod or load some fertilizer—all will help make you healthy. Plus, you are being paid for it! The benefits of small bursts of activity are essentially comparable to longer, more intense workouts. The most important factor appears to be the total amount of activity you get and the calories spent.

Next thing you know, we are going to find out a fresh cigar or a bowl of pipe tobacco or even a few Winstons are good for you!

"I don't think so, Tim."

But it turns out that the activity we engage in almost daily not only helps you sleep well at night, it really is good for the body.

Here's hoping autumn makes up for winter, spring and summer. My fingers are crossed and I've quit washing my car, started carrying an umbrella and try to look for the brighter side of things. Which means I should wrap up with a joke I heard during the worst of the rainfall and flooding.

Fast rising flood waters forced a golf course crew onto the roof of the shop. While they were waiting to be rescued, they couldn't help but notice a hat—a golf hat—that seemed to be moving up and down the sixth fairway.

One crew member turned to another and asked, "I wonder what that is?"

"Oh, that's the boss," came the reply. "He said he was going to cut that fairway today come hell or high water."

So long. 🍀