



The Roller Coaster Ride to Spring

By Monroe S. Miller

The temperature today is 35°F. above normal; a mere two weeks ago, it was an equal amount below the norm for that time and the wind chill factors were at -70° F. Two weeks ago we looked out at two feet of snow on the ground. Today, little remains.

Rollercoaster weather—spring must be getting closer.

Dan Jansen loses a medal in the 500 meter ice skating race in Hamar, Norway. Then, he wins the gold in the 1000 meter event! Our beloved Badgers clobber Purdue, lose to Minnesota, beat Illinois, lose to Northwestern. Griffith starts one game, misses the trip to another, then plays, then doesn't.

Rollercoaster sports—spring must be close in Wisconsin.

The good thing about the winter so far, at least here in our town, is that we have been relaxed with the luxurious snow cover. Although most of us would have liked snow earlier in December, we have been lucky to have what we had for as long as we did. It reminds us that a year ago, ice was the thing instead of snow.

Another month or so, and we will know for sure how spring conditions will likely be for our golf courses. Make no mistake—a lot of grass can be lost in that month with the radical temperature swings we usually experience. But regardless of the outcome, winter's end—and the emotional rollercoaster ride—is nearly here.

February brought some really exciting news to the world of Wisconsin golf. The USGA made a decision at its 100th annual meeting, which was held in Scottsdale, Arizona, to invite Blackwolf Run to host the U.S. Women's Open in 1998.

It will be the first open event conducted by the USGA to come to Wisconsin, and only the eighth USGA tourney to be held in the state overall.

The tournament will be played on

the Rivers Course, rated No. 31 on *GOLF DIGEST's* list of the nation's top 100 courses.

Congratulations to Mike Lee and his gang. They'll be up to the task and make us all proud.

Reality slapped the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in mid-January like a cold blast of frigid arctic air.

On January 18, Dean Roger Wyse, subject of this issue's *Personality Profile*, announced plans to reduce the CALS budget deficit of \$3.1 million over the next three years. Programs and faculty positions will be cut 10 percent to accomplish the savings.

Planning for the changes that will be necessary has been going on for a year and a half. There will be no layoffs needed. Savings will be accomplished through retirements and resignations. Thirty of the 262 faculty positions will be eliminated, along with 25 staff members and five administrators.

An exercise of prioritization in CALS will be used to help make the reduction decisions. The bad news here was the low priority given to entomology. Plant pathology was accorded a "low-medium" priority. Soil science, horticulture and agronomy rated a medium priority.

The tough decisions going on in CALS give a strong signal about how important our past support of turfgrass education, research and extension activities have been. Clearly, it will be even more important in the time to come.

I came across a "guide" to the 1992 *Worker Protection Standard* (WPS) that may merit investigation and clarification by a WGCSA committee. The WPS is a federal regulation designed to protect workers involved in production of agricultural plants and pesticide handlers. That may include us and our employees.

There is a raft of rules and requirements. Among the most interesting for employers is a requirement to provide a "decontamination" site. There are seven items requiring a standard, but few details on the "how" to do this.

I'd like to know one thing, about this and umpteen other government regulations: why don't public employees who make these rules seem to have any responsibility or accountability in getting them to people in the field affected by their rules?

It is merely one more reason, in an endless list of reasons, why Americans dislike, distrust and disrespect government. It doesn't get the job done.

Can't you hardly wait until government starts the Slick medical plan? The only clear detail you'll ever know about it is how much more of your money will disappear to run the damn thing.

You can bet a story on global warming that came out in mid-January didn't get much attention then. Temperatures were stuck in the sub-zero range. But, as the snow is melting today, I looked it up for a reread.

A scientist from the National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, N.C. says data is implicating global warming in making snow melt earlier than it did 20 years ago. The result is that average spring temperatures rise more than in other seasons.

Scientists found a link between variations in the amount of snow covering the ground and a rise of one degree in the average spring temperatures from 1973 to 1992 in the U.S., Canada and Russia. Weather satellite photos were used in the analysis.

They were trying to explain why average temperatures have risen more quickly in the spring than they have during summers and winters. Overall, the average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere during April

is up more than a degree from the early 1970s.

The increase is small, but in the spring the small increase raises temperatures about freezing more often and more snow melts. Bare ground then absorbs more heat than snow does, and this raises the temperature more and allows even more snow to melt.

The result is that farmers could plant crops a little earlier. And, maybe, golf courses could open a little sooner.

We will know in a month how it works out for this year.

Spring is really variable. I looked back in my records to determine when we opened in each of my past 21 seasons at Blackhawk. Half of the time we opened in the first week of April. The other half of the time we opened equally either in March or after April 7th.

In 1987, we opened for play on March 25th. In 1993, we opened on April 23rd. This little bit of local data indicates the hazard of telling mem-

bers when their course will open.

I usually wait until the sticks are in the greens to tell them EXACTLY when the course is open. That's when I know for sure!

Few missed the electric greens mowers at the GCSAA Conference and Show. Ransomes and Jacobsen are out front in this area; these machines are clearly going to have a place in the future (unlike the greens rollers so evident on the show floor a year ago).

And the future is even brighter, now that a device has been developed that can recharge a battery-powered car almost as quickly as you could fill it with gas. The job may take minutes instead of hours.

Electric Power Technology and GNB Battery Technology, a battery company from Atlanta that supplied batteries for the testing, ran tests on a Chevy pickup that recorded how far the truck could travel on batteries in a 24 hour period. It beat the old record

by 200 miles, based mainly on less recharging time. Think of how much farther they'd have gone if the test had used a Ford!

The federal government gave a \$4 million grant to a coalition of companies last year to work on the projects. Great results in a short time, driven by potential profit, undoubtedly.

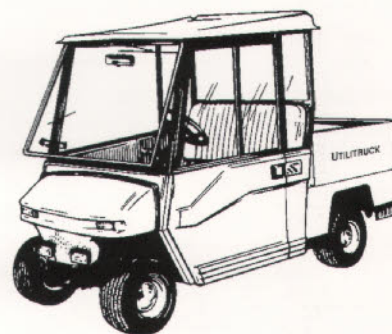
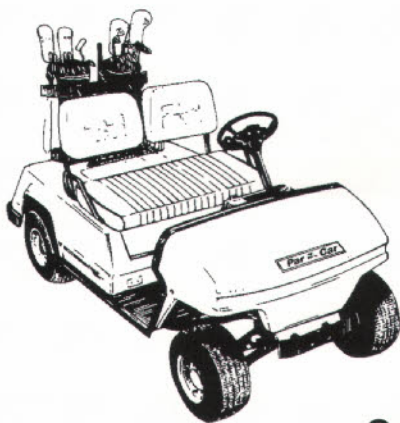
The charger rapidly activates a battery by combining a series of sharp positive and negative impulses, interspersed with a small discharge that allows a more thorough mixing of battery chemicals.

Once the technology is refined and the cost of charging units comes down, the golf course market—golf cars and greens mowers—will likely show a lot of interest.

That's it. Here are wishes for normal temperatures this spring, lots of green grass and gentle rains. And a short spring business meeting on February 28th! 🌱

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