



Make This Your “Year of the Green Section”

By Monroe S. Miller

Winters on golf courses in Wisconsin are a time for planning, anticipation and careful consideration of the upcoming season. I have also found value in devoting time for reflection and review and looking back, not only at seasons most recently gone by but also those from a considerable time ago. It gives a golf course superintendent a chance to see “if I’m on the right track,” or “have I followed the steady course?” and “can others see where I am heading?”

It takes discipline to do that, but such reflective hours may be among your most productive.

This past winter I took out my files, now of considerable thickness, of past USGA Green Section agronomist visits. Taken together, these reports mark the progress of our golf course for the past (nearly) twenty years. It is very clear that the Green Section and I have been partners in that progress, and I swept with gratitude.

It has been the good luck of both myself and Blackhawk’s players to have had access to golf turf agronomists that are among the best anywhere at anytime. There are few in our business who don’t recognize the names of Schwartzkopf, Zontek and Latham. Given a few more years, Bob Vavrek will reach that level of recognition across the country, too.

Clearly, their experience is unmatched, and that is a good bit of what you get when you subscribe to the service. As I read report after report, I was reminded of what a bright, unique group of guys they have been. Their advice, year after year, was honest and straightforward and helpful. Issues were discussed pragmatically when appropriate, and philosophically when required. But always—ALWAYS—the advice was sound.

And I have been smart enough to follow those sound recommendations. The result? Better golf course, more

efficiency and very marked improvement with every passing year.

Don’t misunderstand—I am taking my full share of credit, and giving proper due to Club officials. Clearly, the Green Section isn’t on the property at 2:00 a.m. solving an irrigation problem or writing out checks for expensive equipment that is needed. But the Green Section has been invaluable in our decision making over these many years.

It is almost incomprehensible to me that every golf course superintendent doesn’t subscribe to this superior, singular service. The USGA works at making it affordable and accessible to all of us, and the continuous training and sharing of information among the staff agronomists keeps them on top of the problems and issues that confront us daily.

Sometimes, like the winter day I spent going back in time over past Green Section visit reports, I remind myself “don’t take the Green Section for granted.” It is a service that will be available only as long as enough of us are smart enough to take advantage of it.

Obviously, the message here is this: if you are a veteran subscriber, keep a good thing going. If you are a rookie or in the early time of your career as a golf course superintendent, help yourself by enlisting an agronomist visit for 1994.

Let this be your “Year of the Green Section.” You’ll be grateful, just as so many of us have already been. The Green Section reflects the spirit and essence of golf itself, and that is always good. ♣

