



Grand Finale, A Wonderful Start

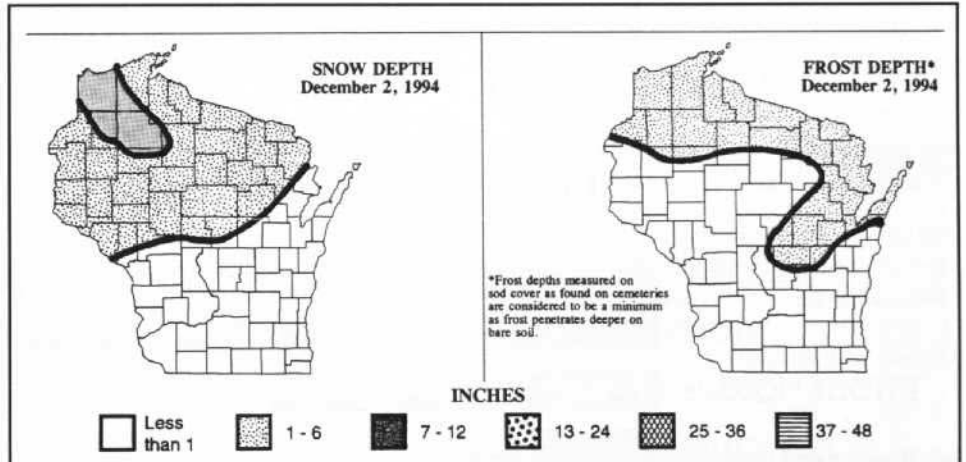
By Monroe S. Miller

I started these lines in the last issue of THE GRASS ROOTS with a lament about our short Wisconsin autumns — usually two months — and our long winters — nearly four months. It was a wasted lament.

The year 1994 ended in a manner that was even better than it began. In our town we had the longest, warmest, grandest and loveliest fall season I can remember. It was a wonderful time to work on a golf course. Jobs that needed doing finally got done, without interference in most cases.

The December 2nd temperature here hit 55 degrees F.! Players had so many bonus days I am convinced some actually grew weary of the game. We had only infrequent rain, just enough to keep grass healthy but not enough to slow us or our employers.

The weather was so good in Madison that we broke the all-time late snow record. The latest point in the year on record for no snowfall was set on November 26, 1902. The record held firm until this year, close to a century later. The killing frost held off too, until that record was threatened. A difference of definition of killing frost between the state climatologist's office and the National Weather Service moves me to stay out of a fray. By any definition, it was late.



I heard only modest complaining about the lack of snow, and it came from deer hunters. But so many I know filled their tag that even their grousing was shortlived.

It seemed fitting that autumn finally did end abruptly; by December 6th we had a foot of snow on the course. Dreams do come true!

Golf course superintendents have a lot in common with farmers, too often looking for some bad news when there really isn't any. Production agriculture in Wisconsin had a bin buster of a year, bringing smiles to producers' faces, along with "corn prices won't amount to much." This is once, however, when I haven't heard a single WGCSA member wish for something other than the year we had.

Here it is in a nutshell: if superintendents and golfers weren't pleased with weather conditions in 1994, they NEVER will be!

Our final soil moisture report from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service appears here, showing soil moisture conditions around the state on November 18, 1994. From now on we will be talking about snow and frost depths here and there in Wisconsin. The reports are gathered from grave diggers in Wisconsin and are valuable information as we record yet another cold, winter season.

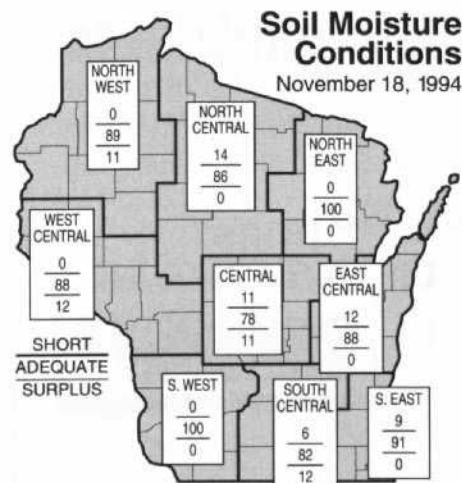
Unfortunately, I am going to miss the WTA winter meeting for the first time ever, and that pains me no small amount. We will be at the Hall of Fame Bowl in Tampa on January 2nd, along with lots of other Badger fans. It was a great fall to enjoy football in Camp Randall in 1994, even if some of the games were frustrating (Purdue and Minnesota come to mind immediately). But I've been going to them since 1964, and in that time context, 1994 was a glorious season.

Worse than the tie and the losses was the conduct of some of the players. It is hard to imagine why some were involved with drugs. The cartoon Rod Johnson sent me summarized it best; Bucky was up against a wall, cops were there with guns drawn and the caption was 'Say it isn't so, Bucky'.

Pretty sad. You have to hope it isn't the price paid for a successful program. Barry Alvarez has made it pretty clear that he won't put up with any more of it.

Madison has been an especially fun place to be since the November elections. Some are still whining and wringing their hands and offering up dire

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warnings of pending disaster. Every day is a holiday when it comes to reading letters to the editor and editorials in the city papers. My advice to the disbelievers is simple — get used to it; there's likely more to come.

Everybody has their own idea as to what it all means and their own "spin" to offer. Here's mine.

The election proved there is still a mainstream America. It pays the bills and is finally, at long last, beginning to demand some responsibility in return. Its patience is worn out, and it is sick of a big, clumsy, unresponsive government run by deaf politicians and rude bureaucrats. It wants less government, not more. Fewer government workers, not more. Lower taxes. Less waste. Less interference.

Maybe mainstream America, who goes to work everyday and comes home tired, is disgusted. Not mean spirited. Not heartless. Not devoid of compassion. But for sure frustrated by

the lack of accountability on the part of too many. Everything from farm subsidies to rich farmers to welfare payments for irresponsible single parents to absolutely gross waste by the Defense Department is driving mainstreamers crazy.

It seems I can sense resentment for a leader who sends the country's sons to war and decides who can serve on what terms but dodged the draft himself. There is similar feeling in some mainstreamers about the first spouse who thinks she knows what is best for us, but clearly doesn't. Witness the health care fiasco.

Mainstream Americans cannot see the need for illegal immigration, midnight basketball or severely restrictive gun control. It believes the concepts of right and wrong, legal and illegal, shouldn't be that difficult for any citizen to grasp.

The election is giving a new group of politicians the chance to change things for the better. They don't have much time.

And my guess is they will be given little room for error or they will be out, too.

Finally, those attending the GCSAA conference will have the pleasure of seeing a good Wisconsin native receive the association's Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. Milt Engelke, professor of turfgrass breeding and genetics at Texas A & M, is a native of Grant county and a graduate (B.S. degree) of Platteville. He received his M.S. and PhD from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He's spoken from one end of the country to the other, and was featured at our EXPO 94 last year.

His bentgrass breeding program and his work developing 'Prairie' buffalograss has put him in special company that includes O.J. Noer and J. R. Love. He has earned the award and our congratulations. 🏆

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