



WHAT WILL SPRING BRING?

By Monroe S. Miller

This is always a tense and tentative time of year for golf course superintendents in the northern parts of the country—that includes us in Wisconsin. Excepting those years when snow comes early and stays until mid-March, there are always questions about winter injury. Those questions loom really big after a winter like the one we've just lived through.

It has been ugly. The fall was wet and snow came early. Lots of golf courses had a really tough time getting fungicides applied for snowmold diseases. In our case, we never were able to put down our normal top-dressing.

Then came the warm temperatures in mid-January. In our town we reached a record high of 55 degrees F on January 18th, the predicted snow didn't arrive and the temperature dropped to 0 degrees F that night with 30 mph winds. What did that do to turf?

The first few days of February saw the record low temperatures that will be talked about for years. And, almost as if to make a nightmare come true, it warmed up into the 40s and 50s in that first week, melting most snow.

We all know by now that serious turf injury can result from wide temperatures swings and repeated freeze/thaw cycles. Whether or not that will happen this spring remains to be seen. Hope springs eternal, and I hope we have—all of us—a good start.

The weird weather we have experienced brought out the usual suspects to explain them. Various we read about everything from el nino to global warming. Global warming was used as blame for all the snow the East Coast received this winter. It is also the reason given for the hot humid summer of 1995, the oddball rainfall patterns of recent years, and even the brutal cold we had the past few months.

When it is so cold that people aren't snowmobiling or cross country skiing or even ice fishing, global warming is a tough sell.

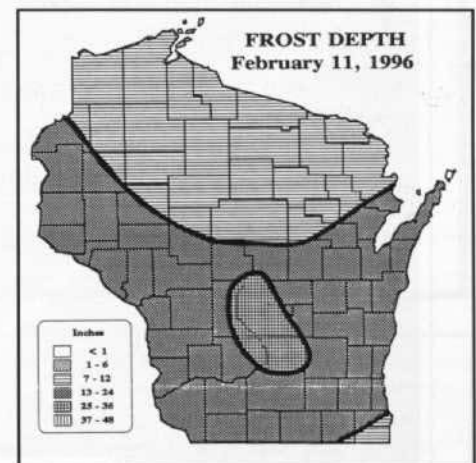
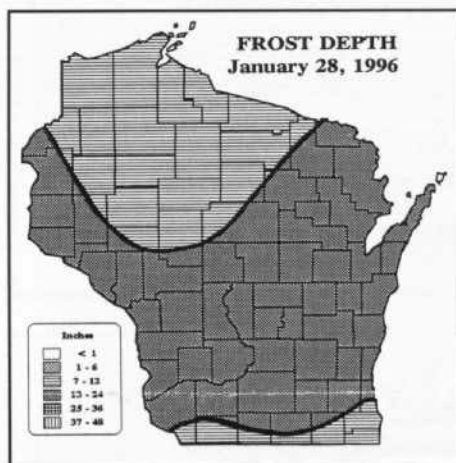
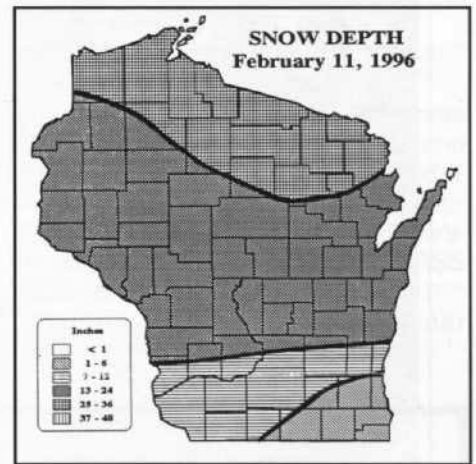
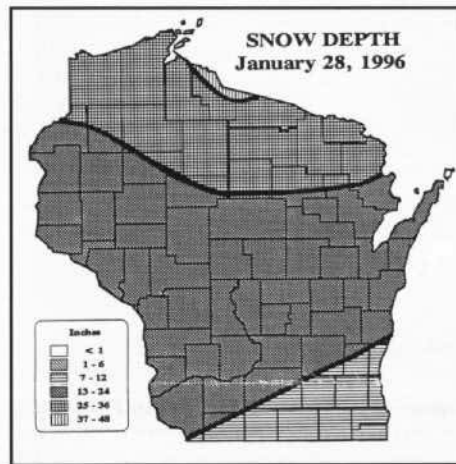
I don't buy it. My prediction is that all of these unusual weather phenomena signal a return to the Ice Age!

The graphics of snow and frost depths in Wisconsin are from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service.

its 101-year history.

Judy Bell, a member of the executive committee since 1987, said her presidency won't be a women's golf crusade. "The number of women who are learning the game is incredible," she said. "I'm supportive of everyone having a chance to play regardless of race, gender or income."

Bell said the chief role of the USGA is to set rules, protect the game from



The USGA and the PGA preceded the GCSAA to Orlando for annual, national meetings. The USGA annual meeting was held on January 27th and elected its first female president in

technology, oversee the handicap system and define amateur status. "It's important the history and traditions of the game hang together," she said.

Bell was also the first woman to be named to the Executive Committee in 1987.

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Everyone who loves trees, and that would include most golf course superintendents, has to be worried about the gypsy moth movement into Wisconsin.

A program to kill the caterpillars will be expanded this spring to include 35,000 acres at 38 sites in 16 counties. The Wisconsin DATCP will manage the spraying.

That is about 6,000 more acres than were treated last spring. The 35,000 acres isn't the most acres treated since the program started in 1990 but it represents the most sites. It will cost \$550,000, with the feds picking up half the tab.

The eradication program centers on aerial spraying of designated areas with a bacterial insecticide. It usually starts about May 20th and is completed by June 10th. The number of male gypsy moths trapped last fall was **10 TIMES** greater than in 1994. The whole thing is a bad moon on the rise.

The gypsy moth is such a serious pest because it feeds on the leaves of more than 300 different trees and shrubs. An infestation of them could have a disastrous impact on a golf course.

The history of the gypsy moth in the U.S. goes back to 1869 when a scientist transported some eggs from France to Massachusetts, near Boston. Some of the eggs blew out of a window and weren't retrieved. So now we have infestations in 16 states.

Most of the sites to be sprayed in Wisconsin are along the Green Bay and the Lake Michigan shoreline where moths settle after riding winds across the lake in the summer. Counties in the spray program are Brown, Dane, Door, Eau Claire, Kenosha, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marathon, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Portage, Racine, Sheboygan and Waukesha.

Worries about this pest are amplified by rumors that the Extension Entomologist position Dr. Chuck Koval held won't be filled by CALS administration. Brilliant.

Research in the turfgrass sciences is fundamental to our future prosperity, and to that end I thought you might be interested in an addition to the UW-Madison Biotron.

Built in the mid-1960s (I remember it well!), the Biotron building serves as a forum for any type of scientific experiments where the manipulation of temperature, daylight, oxygen, carbon dioxide levels and humidity are needed.

It is so critical to UW-Madison researchers that a \$1.8 million addition was just completed. The new addition houses one of the few sites in the US able to construct research environments comparable to African deserts and South American rainforests.

Dr. Ted Tibits, a colleague of Frank Rossi's in the CALS Department of Horticulture, says the Biotron is one of the most famous buildings on campus. "The UW-Madison Biotron is well known as having better capabilities than any other of its kind in the country." Tibits is well known himself for his activity with the NASA space program and experiments launched aboard the space shuttles.

The Biotron can study cold temperature effects on turfgrass, cancer cures and AIDS research. Researchers use the light control at the facility to expose lab rats to unnatural amounts of daylight in a jet lag study, as well as to study the hibernation patterns of animals.

Deep sea conditions can be simulated in the Biotron to study water

pressure effects on divers. Another study creates hot humid conditions to study a wild grass native to the south-east.

The new addition adds 25 sealed research spaces to the Biotron mix, allowing work to be done previously unavailable anywhere in the Midwest.

Congratulations to WGCSA members Dick Nugent and Marc Davison, designer and superintendent of Green Bay Country Club. The course made it into the Golf Digest best new golf courses for 1995 (private) list. It was judged sixth best.

I came across a comment and evaluation remark summary, but cannot print it here because of copyright laws. But you can trust me—the opinions of the panelists were positive and powerful, and you'll have a chance to see for yourself on May 29th if you play in the SUPER/PRO event!

As a final thought, please take note of our new advertisers and welcome them into the Wisconsin golf turf business. Along with our long term supporters, they help make our golf courses possible and give you THE GRASS ROOTS six times a year.

Here's wishing us the best year ever in 1996! 🍀

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