



BIG WEATHER IN COOL SUMMER

By Monroe S. Miller

Few are more aware of the weather than golf course superintendents. And among them, I may be a worst case scenario. I grew up on a farm, and a farmer's well being and prosperity are even more dependent on weather than a superintendent's is. In the cool summer of 1996, it occurred to me that lately we've been having big weather events. It is disquieting.

In the last little while — since the last issue of *THE GRASS ROOTS*, really — our town and county were blasted by heavy rains on June 17th and 18th that led to water damage and losses tallied in the millions. A substantial piece of our new tee for the 16th hole had to be repaired; we were fortunate that the Bruce Company is close and always willing to lend a hand. We were in business in two days. Area courses and their employees cursed heavy shovels of sand in bunkers — they had intimate knowledge of the work after a while because of the many and severe washouts. It is old fashioned, back-breaking bull work. There were fish

on a fairway at Yahara Hills, abandoned cars on streets and sandbaggers working furiously in Monona.

Other parts of Wisconsin got it too, especially southcentral Wisconsin. It was the third wettest June on record. Comparison to last year was stark — by June 17th in 1996 we had received 9.04" and in 1995 only 0.74" of rainfall! Big change. Big weather.

A month later on July 18th the skies opened again and dumped over 11" of rain in Green county, isolating the city of Monroe and causing \$41 million in damage in that area. Worse yet was the tornado that ripped through Oakfield, flattening half the town in a flash. Somehow, miraculously, no one was killed.

And all summer, cool temperatures reigned. As I write this, I am certain we reached the 90s only a couple of times so far this year. The last weeks of July barely saw 80 degree warmth. Roots on golf turf have never been deeper at this time of the year. Fungicide use is down, evening out the extra disease controlled demanded by the hot year of 1995.

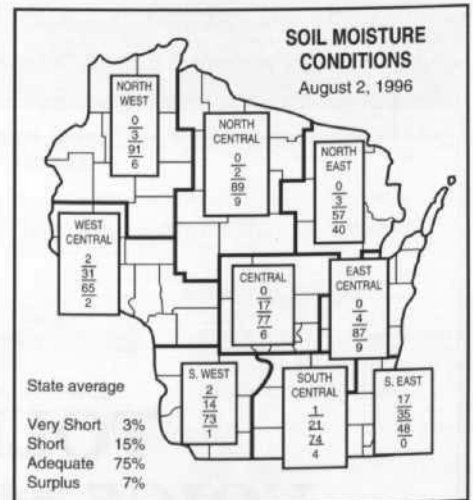
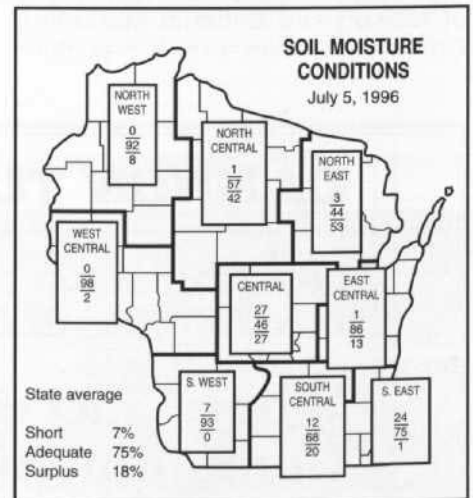
Certainly we all could do without the extremes big weather have been giving us. But the events of late still pale compared to last February - minus 45 degrees F was the reading when we left Madison for Orlando and the GCSAA conference!

This is a great time of year in Wisconsin. July 25th was significant as it was the first morning there were no morning birds singing at 4:30 a.m. July 28th is always welcomed since it is the date the daily high drop one degree in our town. And August 2nd saw Cheryl and me in Lambeau Field in Green Bay for a Packer/Patriot game. On August 6th, from top of the hill occupied by our clubhouse, I saw a splash of red color in the distance to the west, the first sign that fall is on our doorstep. Granted, it was only a scrap of color, but any bright color on that wall of green we see from the first and tenth tees is pretty. It pro-

claimed, to me at least, that the days of heavy air, ground fog and calm winds were nearly here. They are the best of days on a golf course to me.

For lots of folks, summer is a time of ease. Not for us. Maybe that is why autumn is always so welcome. O, Happy Days!

The Wisconsin Ag Stat Service maps are here for posterity.



Summer time, for all the years I have been on a golf course, has been a stressful time. Although I handle it a lot better than I used to and I

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worry a lot less, it remains a time of excessive wear and tear on the body, mind and spirit.

Here's a fact: life without stress is impossible. And here's another one: stress in moderation can bring out the best in us. It is creative tension that leads to better performance.

The kind of stress that can kill you is that which leads to distress. You cannot control events or situations that cause stress, but you can (to some considerable extent) control yourself. I ran across some excellent advice from a University of Kentucky bulletin on how to conquer stress. Here is the list:

- concentrate on what you are doing.
- don't blame or complain.
- think of those you love.
- be "with" Mother Nature, something that should be easy for us.
- run, sing, smile.
- give to others.
- exercise, mediate.
- learn to say NO.

Computers are overrated. Grossly overrated, at least in a golf course shop. We replaced our original IBM that came with the Toro Network 8000 system we installed in 1989. The new one has been a huge headache and only a sharp assistant like Oscar Peterson could have worked his way through all the problems with the new computer we bought from Toro Irrigation.

They have been software problems, for the most part. If Toro's mowing equipment was on par with this software, they'd be out of business.

Imagine the "I told you so" thoughts that went through my mind when Cheryl handed me an article

from the June 24, 1996 issue of NEWSWEEK. Its title was "The 1,000 Year Glitch."

The opening paragraph was written for me: "If you've ever felt that computers were a scourge upon the earth, just wait three and a half years or so. Then you're really going to hate these digital buggers."

When the first two digits of the new century turn from 19 to 20, millions of computers across the country will be lost. Among them will be our irrigation system computer, no doubt. Another hassle on the horizon. They will think the year 2000 is 1900!

You can figure thousands of programmers are working to fix the glitch. But it is no easy fix, and it is going to cost a fortune - one estimate is \$300 billion for the U.S.

Isn't the age of technology great?

A couple of really excellent articles about golf course superintendents and their work appeared in two different midwestern newspapers in June. Both were superb reading.

Rob Schultz, writing in Madison's *THE CAPITAL TIMES*, captured the essence of Randy Smith, his decision to leave our profession and the situation at Nakoma. Rob's writing was perceptive and I think at least part of the reason he hit so close to the mark was that he has known us so well for so long. That, and the fact he is an excellent writer. It appears in his "SPORTS PAGE" Column.

My sister and her family live near Detroit and they sent me an article from *THE DETROIT FREE PRESS* that appeared just prior to the US Open at Oakland Hills. It was written by Jo-Ann Barns, a *FREE PRESS*

sports writer. Her piece was written about Steve Glossinger, superintendent at the Open course. She struck the nail squarely, too.

Her writing resulted, I'd guess, from following Glossinger around the course for a day. She was given more column inches than you normally see, with a couple of good photos and several sidebars as well. Two quotes were memorable: "The whole world is going to see what I do for a living," and "Not a bad office, is it?"

If you'd like, let me know and I will send you a copy of Barns' article.

Frank Rossi was in town for a few days in July. It was a whirlwind tour for him; he didn't slow down during his entire visit. Emily Buelow is completing her MS degree at the UW-Madison and Frank continues as her Major Professor. They had lots to discuss. He also serves on Steve Millett's PhD committee and spent some time with the guy who is so popular with Wisconsin golf course superintendents.

If you listened to the Ideas Network — Wisconsin Public Radio, you heard Frank on July 19th. If you happened to attend the Tri-State Conference of the Master Gardener Program in Stevens Point on Monday and Tuesday (7/22 & 7/23) you heard Professor Rossi give the keynote address. Or you could have seen him at the Dane County Fair on Saturday night, or at Wisconsin Dells with his daughter Danielle, or playing golf at my course on Sunday afternoon, or partying at Steve Millett's birthday (surprise!) party on Sunday or reflecting in his old office on campus any number of other
(Continued on page 7)

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(Continued from page 5)

times. Oh, and he filmed his portion of Wisconsin Public Television's hour show on home lawns, with Shelly Ryan at the Noer Facility and in the Allen Centennial Gardens on campus.

Here is a fact: he may be in New York State, but a bit of his heart is (and hopefully always will be) in Wisconsin.

Back in 1992, the Atlanta Olympic organizers proposed to include golf in the 1996 Summer Games, and their plan was to hold the competition at the Augusta National Golf Club. The debate centered around whether golf belongs in the Olympics. Also, some wondered if Augusta would be the appropriate venue, given their membership practices. In December 1992, the International Olympic Committee's 10-member executive board was evenly split on the issue.

After months of dispute the Atlanta organizers dropped their request.

Now that the Centennial Games are over and I wasted time watching sports like beach volleyball, horse riding, shooting, walking, etc., I'll be darned if I can understand why golf isn't in the Games — more people play golf (I'm 99.9% sure) than ride horses, play beach volleyball or target shoot.

Maybe in four years some logic will prevail.

He did it again! Six weeks after winning his first PGA tour event, Wisconsin's Steve Stricker won the Western Open with an eight-shot margin!

The Edgerton native, who now makes his home here in Madison, took home the trophy and a cool \$360,000 more than the Kemper Open win gave him. His total earnings from playing for the year is \$925,933.

He makes us all proud.

Reinders' Appleton branch recently completed a 5,400 square foot addition that will give them some much needed space in both warehousing and in equipment service areas.

That branch opened in the Fox Valley in 1990 and has been extremely well received by area golf course superintendents. Three staff people work there, supporting other

Reinders' employees who work in that part of Wisconsin. It is a "self-service" facility where superintendents can select items they need right from the shelves.

They now have the Appleton branch (1990), the Madison branch (1993) and the Stevens Point branch (1996). And then there is home base in Elm Grove (1866!).

We owe thanks to John Mielke of Jacobsen and Al Nees of Milorganite for making the unique covers of this issue possible — they paid the extra cost. Neither hesitated when I asked — thanks to a couple of great guys!

I received a nice letter from Randy Zidik in mid-July. He commented that he enjoyed his visit to Wisconsin for the WGCSA spring business meeting, and that my memory was wrong when I wrote I remembered him as supporting the one man/one vote concept. The record needs to reflect that. He also pointed out that I misspelled Pittsburgh; I have already corrected *THE GRASS ROOTS* spell check so it isn't spelled "Pittsburg" again.

It missed Wayne Horman's "The Surrounds", so I will record the birthdate of Clarissa Sue Marquardt on 7/21/96 here. She is the second daughter and fifth child of Kendall Marquardt. She weighed seven pounds 10 ounces at birth. Congratulations to the family!

I have had the chance, over the nearly 25 years I have been a golf course superintendent in this town, to do a few favors. Among the biggest have been the times I have talked people out of building a putting green in their backyard.

Most who have asked for my advice have followed it — "don't do it; you'll regret it in short order." Several have ignored me and gone ahead and built a green. All but one of them returned to say "I wish I'd listened to you; that damned green demands constant attention."

Imagine my surprise upon reading a clipping sent to me by a good friend. It was taken from the 7/26/96 *WALL STREET JOURNAL* — "Staying Put: For Status-Conscious, Backyard Greens Are Par For The Course."

The essence of the article is that the golf craze in America has hemorrhaged into backyards and onto estates. From a modest artificial turf putting green to a full blown golf hole or two by a recognized golf course architect, people who love golf are replacing tennis courts with golf course features. The extreme may be Steve Wynn; you'll remember him from our last GCSAA conference in Las Vegas. He dropped \$43 million on a course of his own!

For the wealthy, it may not be so bad. They generally have the resources to hire someone competent to take care of their creations. The tough spot is for the average Joe (or JoAnn) who is clueless when it comes to close mowing, plant diseases, winterkill, thatch, insects, weeds and, most of all, irrigation.

He'd be better off joining a club than trying to create his own.

A fairly nice golf season is winding down. With it comes hope for a great Wisconsin autumn with some beautiful fall color. Lots of Packer and Badger victories, some super meetings (topped by the Symposium) and we will be able to say, after some tough times of late, "What a great profession." 🍷

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