

# THE ANXIETY SEASON

By Monroe S. Miller

Am I the only golf course superintendent who suffers pangs of anxiety at this time of the year, at the dawn of spring (or is it the dusk of winter?)? It seems to be worse with each passing year; I lay it to the weird winters we have had lately.

The anxiousness comes from all the unknowns, all the questions. Did the ice on our greens cause any serious damage? Did we get it removed in time? Should we have just left it alone? What did the brutally cold weather do to fairway turf? Will the snowmold materials hold up? What will the five serious, significant freeze/thaw cycles do to course conditions? Will this last snow cover stay for awhile? Will spring be early or late? Will the summer indeed be a scorcher? Ad nauseam.

You get to a point where you want spring to arrive just so you know where you stand. The emotion of early winter that causes you to shrug your shoulders and say, once and for all, "you cannot do any more until spring" is gone. Now I want spring to be here. I am done with the mental postponing of solutions to problems (which I might not even have!).

December is a great month because of the holidays. But this year it was really gray in our town — 23 of 31 days were cloudy. January wasn't much better — the temperature extremes amplified the gloominess.

But then February came and with it the light! The days are noticeably longer, on both ends. The snow on the golf course, the sun circling higher and higher in the sky, and the still leafless trees yield a brightness that can lift a guy's spirits. It is too early to equate that light with heat, but it makes the wait for March a lot easier.

Some winter weather statistics from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Office are here for your consideration.

I never thought I'd see the day when the word "turf" was in the headline of a sports page of *The Capital Times*. But it happened during that week before the NFC championship game at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. The story of 30 semi truck loads of big rolls of sod from Maryland being laid down that week will now be part of the Packer legend. Be sure to read Norm Ray's story elsewhere in *The Grass Roots*.

By the way, at least one WGCSA member attended the Super Bowl. Randy Witt of Oneida Golf and Riding Club was in New Orleans for the festivities and the game. He was still talking about it in Las Vegas at the GCSAA conference!

The opening session at the just completed GCSAA conference reminded me of some unfortunate news about the keynote speaker of two years ago. Rocky Bleier has hit a rocky financial road and declared bankruptcy.

It is an unfamiliar place for the great football player who grew up in Appleton, went to Notre Dame on a football scholarship and returned home from Vietnam as a war hero and Purple Heart holder. He went on to win four Super Bowl rings with the Steelers.

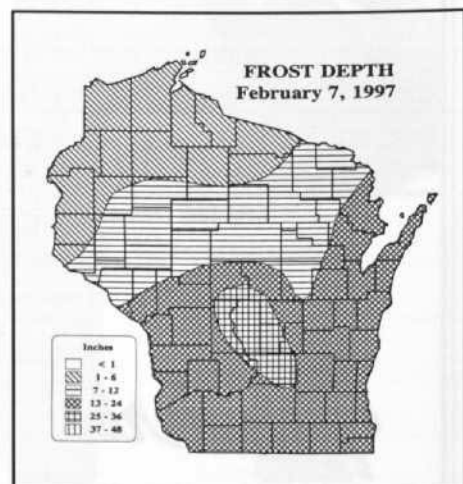
The Rock got involved in a messy divorce and despite a lucrative career as a successful (which we can testify to) motivational speaker (to the tune of \$300,000 a year), he was so desperate financially he sold his four Super Bowl rings for \$10,000 apiece. His salvation will be that audiences are still eager and enthusiastic to hear him speak. What he needs is a good money manager.

We all have a hero or two, and I certainly have mine. I tend to view them as near perfect, indestructible individuals who can accomplish nearly everything they attempt in life. I subconsciously attach superhuman qualities to them.

Imagine my shock when I read that one of my heroes was stricken with cancer. In fact, I think the entire golf world was stunned by the news in mid-January that Arnold Palmer withdrew from Bob Hope's Chrysler Classic to have prostate cancer taken care of.

He had surgery on Wednesday, January 15th at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. A spokesman for the clinic described the operation as "successful". We can only hope so; his hard-charging style and gracious manner are needed even more in these days of spoiled and arrogant professional athletes.

I spoke to Jeff Parks about Arnold, since Jeff works for him. Jeff's report in mid-February was that "they are having a difficult time keeping him in bed in Orlando." Good sign!



I ran across this little tidbit during my winter reading. The word "tractor" (which we all have in our shops) was made up by a man in Charles City, Iowa. He was an advertising man by the name of W.H. Williams. The manufacturing company he was working for (Hart-Parr, a predecessor to Oliver tractors, which were a predecessor to White tractors) had a machine call the "gasoline traction engine." All this was too long for the ad, so he shortened it to "tractor."

And in our next issue I will tell you what "Toro" stands for!

The turfgrass industry is always on the move, and the latest move took place here in Wisconsin when Jacobsen bought the Bunton Company of Louisville, KY.

Bunton was started in 1948; it acquired the Goodall Company in 1969. In 1995 Bunton's sales were \$19 million. Jacobsen president Phil Tralies indicated their interest in Bunton was product quality, reliability and innovation. Also involved in the decision to acquire the company were growth potential, and enhanced position of Jacobsen in the commercial lawn-care market.

Bunton facilities will remain in Kentucky.

With another season so close, thoughts turn to the routine that will soon begin and continue through next November. And with that routine comes the complaining from the summer crew about the jobs they have to do. An informal poll at our place rates trimming with a push rotary, bunker raking, shelter house cleaning, flower bed weeding and any kind of painting as the most loathed work. Gender doesn't change the list one way or the other.

Since there are some clear comparison between farm work and golf course work, compare the work that farm boys and girls hated most in 1946 (and then try to tell me the times haven't changed!).

A farm magazine did a poll on the most detested farm jobs; according to boys they were, in order: hauling manure, cleaning out the henhouse, milking and slopping hogs.

Girls hated, again in order: cooking for threshers, washing the cream separator, washing dishes, ironing, and plucking chickens.

Which, as I contemplate it, makes

me even happier about the wonderful days and times I grew up in.

With that, I wish all of us a beautiful spring time. Happy trails until we meet again, most likely at a WGCSA meeting. To welcome the next season, I offer the accompanying photo of a season just past. Is this a classic or what? One look and nearly anyone in the world could figure out Terry Ward is a Wisconsin guy through and through. The blaze orange hunting coat, the blaze orange Green Bay Packer hat, an eight-point buck — all immediate giveaways! Taken last fall near Plymouth, it reminds us that autumn will return again before we know it! 🍂



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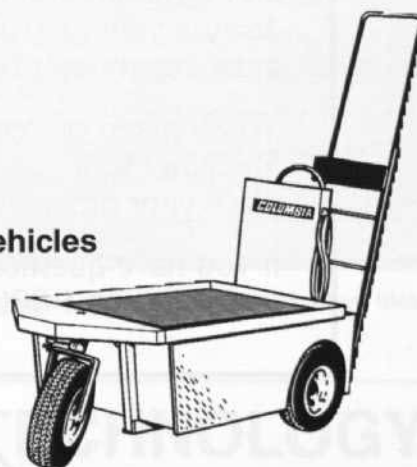
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