



# WE'RE GOOD TO GO!

By Monroe S. Miller

There were lots of smiles on the faces of golf players and golf course superintendents in Wisconsin as spring emerged from late winter (if winter is what you want to call December, January and February past). Mostly, conditions were simply delightful.

And why shouldn't they have been? We didn't really have any winter. Lake Mendota in our town froze the latest ever and opened early enough to set a record for fewest days of ice for as long as records have been kept. The biggest snow of the season came in the third week of March, and yet we still were able to open on March 26th. The winter was mild beyond my memory.

February was the warmest February worldwide since record keeping began in 1856. The average air temperature worldwide was 1.35 degrees higher than normal. Cause? No surprise — El Nino. Rainfall in the U.S. was at its third-highest level for February. To date, in our town at least, year-to-date precip is well above normal.

Snow mold pressure was high, probably due to the extra moisture. Some superintendents were out early making additional applications to control disease or doing some spot treating.

I've seen a lot of spring openings in Wisconsin and not one has been this good. It may be a "one year in a hundred" event, where the biggest task will be keeping conditions this good for the rest of the season.

It's under 60 days until the U.S. Women's Open starts play at Blackwolf Run, the state's best and most famous golf course. This will be the first time ever that Wisconsin has hosted a U.S. Women's Open; can the U.S. Open be far behind? The Open has never been held in Wisconsin either. Our cover and Personality Profile recognize and honor this

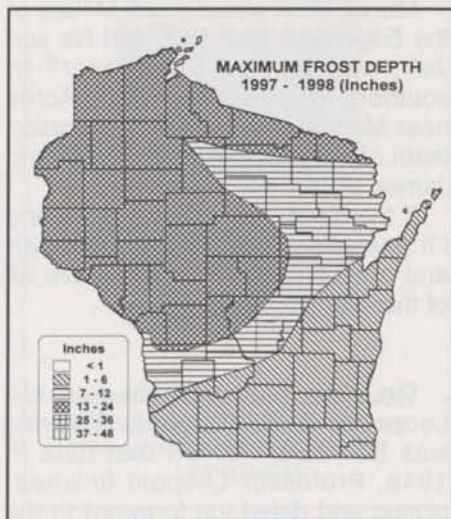
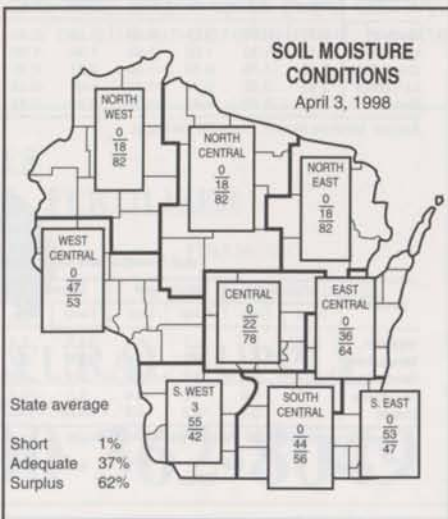
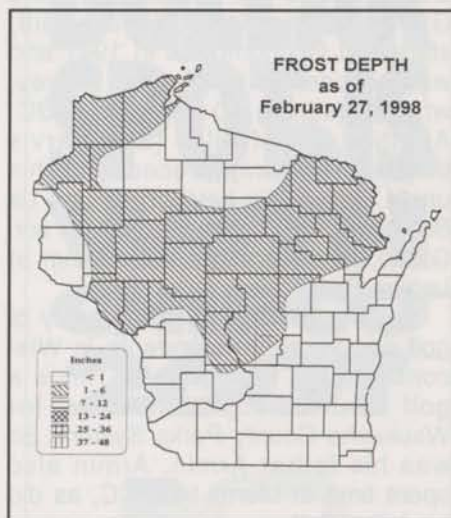
notable golf event in Wisconsin.

Blackwolf Run and Kohler staff worked hard for a long time to convince the USGA that Wisconsin wasn't some golfing backwater and that we'd support a major sporting event like the Women's Open. Like almost everything else they tackle, they were successful.

Good luck to Mike Lee and his staff. Do yourself a favor and take your family over to Blackwolf Run for a day during the practice rounds or the tourney itself.

The last issue of *The Grass Roots* had been on the street and in the newsstand for only a few hours before I learned of several more father/son Wisconsin golf course superintendent families. Randy Witt wondered how I could forget the Bahrs. Joe has been in the LaCrosse/West Salem area for most of his life, many years at LaCrosse CC and The Bluffs. His son Jeff is also a western Wisconsin superintendent, and (boy, is this embarrassing)

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worked at Blackhawk CC while he was working on his B.S. degree in turfgrass management at the UW-Madison. Joe has another son John who is also a golf course superintendent, at the Prairie du Chien CC.

Then Dave Noltner suggested I look close to home. Since I've lived in Middleton for 21 years, the light bulb lit quickly. Jerry Kessenich was the superintendent at Pleasant View from its very beginning, and his son Joe succeeded him. Jerry is now retired, and a couple of years ago Joe took advantage of an excellent opportunity and switched careers.

John Krutilla called and pointed out he had been the superintendent at Stevens Point CC, Lakelawn Lodge, and Grand Geneva. His son James is now the golf course superintendent at Towne CC in Edgerton. John offered more leads which I followed through on.

There have been three generations of Millers who have managed Oconomowoc GC and Lac La Belle GC for a long time. William (Bill) started at Oconomowoc in 1947 and was succeeded by his son Harvey, who is nearing 40 years at OGC. Another son of Bill's (and Harv's brother) Ken, was preceded by his uncle Gus (Bill's brother) at Lac La Belle. Ken was succeeded by his son Glenn, who remains at the helm at Lac La Belle.

Another three generation family of golf course superintendents in Wisconsin is the Honeyagers. Tim is a golf course superintendent for Waukesha County Parks System. So was his father Armin. Armin also spent time at Merrill Hills CC, as did his father Arthur.

More? How about Fred Millies of the Edgewater Golf Club and his son Jeff, now also at Edgewater? In southern Wisconsin at Windy Acres near Monroe, are the two generation team of Kriegers — James L. Sr. and James M. Jr.

If there are more, let me know and I'll pass the details on to historian and author Clay Loyd, as I have all of these families.

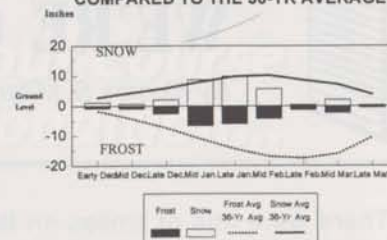
On this past March 4, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* was 50 years old. On that date in 1948, Professor Leopold finished, signed and dated the foreword to the

Wisconsin Average Precipitation  
October 1, 1997 - March 31, 1998 1/

District	Total	Normal	Departure from normal	Percent of normal
Northwest	10.34	9.40	0.94	110
North Central	10.22	9.70	0.52	105
Northeast	10.90	10.43	0.47	105
West Central	11.19	9.19	2.00	122
Central	9.65	10.11	-0.46	95
East Central	10.00	10.69	-0.69	94
Southwest	12.28	10.03	2.25	122
South Central	11.48	10.86	0.61	106
Southeast	11.58	11.67	-0.09	99
State	10.74	10.01	0.73	107

1/Preliminary. Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.

1997-98 SNOW & FROST DEPTHS  
COMPARED TO THE 36-YR AVERAGE



Snow and Frost Depths, Winter 1997-98

Month	Snow Depths					Frost Depths				
	1996-97		1997-98 1/		Normal 2/	1996-97		1997-98 1/		Normal 2/
	Date	Inches	Date	Inches	Inches	Date	Inches	Date	Inches	Inches
Early December	12/1	3.3	12/5	1.1	2.7	12/1	3.2	12/5	0.9	1.8
Mid-December	12/13	3.4	12/19	0.7	4.4	12/13	2.5	12/19	1.0	4.3
Late December	12/27	8.6	1/2	2.1	5.9	12/27	5.0	1/2	2.7	7.3
Mid-January	1/10	8.7	1/16	8.7	8.0	1/10	6.7	1/16	6.7	11.0
Late January	1/24	7.9	1/30	9.9	9.8	1/24	10.5	1/30	6.1	14.4
Mid-February	2/7	12.2	2/13	5.7	10.2	2/7	11.9	2/13	4.3	16.9
Late February	2/21	8.2	2/27	0.4	8.6	2/21	10.4	2/27	1.4	17.5
Mid-March	3/7	5.6	3/13	2.1	7.2	3/7	8.1	3/13	2.4	16.0
Late March	3/21	6.9	3/27	0.3	3.9	3/21	5.5	3/27	0.6	10.4
Averages		7.2		3.4	6.7		7.1		2.9	11.1

1/Survey dates vary between 1995-96 and 1996-97. 2/1961-97 and 1962-98 averages.

Mean Temperature and Departure from Normal, Fahrenheit, Winter 1997-98

Location	October		November		December		January		February		March		Six months	
	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.	Avg.	Dep.
Madison	50.2	1.3	33.3	-2.1	27.9	6.2	23.7	7.7	33.6	12.9	34.2	1.8	33.8	4.6
Milwaukee	51.6	1.3	34.8	-2.9	30.4	6.0	26.9	8.0	34.6	11.6	35.8	2.6	35.7	3.1
Green Bay	47.7	-0.3	31.9	-2.5	27.9	7.7	22.2	7.9	31.2	13.0	33.3	1.6	32.4	4.9
La Crosse	52.9	2.8	32.6	-2.8	28.9	8.6	24.0	9.5	33.7	13.8	35.7	2.9	34.7	6.0
Duluth	43.9	0.2	24.9	-3.5	22.7	9.9	16.4	9.4	28.9	16.6	25.5	1.1	27.1	5.7

Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.

Total Precipitation and Departure from Normal, Water Equivalent Inches, Winter 1997-98

Location	October		November		December		January		February		March		Six months	
	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.
Madison	1.31	-0.86	1.20	-0.89	1.25	-0.59	2.24	1.17	1.44	0.36	5.46	3.29	12.90	2.48
Milwaukee	1.11	-1.30	1.02	-1.40	1.30	-1.03	3.60	2.00	2.19	0.74	3.18	0.51	12.40	-0.48
Green Bay	0.93	-1.30	0.30	-1.86	0.61	-0.92	2.21	1.06	0.80	-0.23	3.66	1.61	8.51	-1.64
La Crosse	2.42	0.22	0.24	-1.49	0.64	-0.63	1.75	0.82	2.71	1.81	2.52	0.56	10.28	1.29
Duluth	2.29	-0.20	0.43	-1.37	0.41	-0.81	1.72	0.50	2.72	1.92	2.18	0.27	9.75	0.31

Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.

Total Snowfall and Departure from Normal, Inches, Winter 1997-98

Location	October		November		December		January		February		March		Six months	
	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.	Total	Dep.
Madison	3.9	3.7	3	-0.4	14.3	1.8	18.9	7.2	1.8	-6.2	12	2.8	53.9	8.9
Milwaukee	T	-0.4	1.1	1.6	10.6	-0.8	23.7	10.8	0.5	-10.7	3.7	-5.1	39.6	-4.6
Green Bay	0.2	0.0	0.7	-3.9	6.2	-6.3	24.2	12.5	1.2	-6.8	11.5	2.3	44.0	-2.2
La Crosse	T	0.0	1.8	-9.6	6.0	-10.1	16.2	-1.0	3.8	-6.5	10.4	-3.7	38.2	-30.9
Duluth	1.2	-0.1	16.9	5.5	6.0	-10.6	29.9	12.7	9.6	-0.7	14.2	0.1	77.8	6.9

T=Trace. Source: Matthew Menne, State Climatologist.



Almanac. The book brought him world fame, respect and acclaim; sadly, he died not long after that while helping fight a forest fire on the farm of a neighbor near his shack north of Baraboo.

Leopold wrote the Almanac in Madison, most of it in his office on the UW-Madison campus. He was chairman of the Game Management Department in the College of Agriculture. The building that housed that department has long since been demolished.

On this past March 4, the anniversary was celebrated in the Wisconsin State Capitol building. His daughter, Nina Leopold Bradley, was among those who participated in a public reading of Leopold's words.

The final words written by Professor Leopold are these:

*"That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten..."*

*"Such a view of land and people is, of course, subject to the blurs and distortions of personal experience and personal bias. But wherever truth may lie, this much is crystal clear: our bigger-and-better society is now like a hypochondriac, so obsessed with its own economic health as to have lost the capacity to remain healthy. The whole world is so greedy for more bathtubs that it has lost the stability necessary to build them, or even to turn off the tap. Nothing could be more salutary at this stage than a little healthy contempt for a plethora of material blessings."*

*"Perhaps such a shift of values can be achieved by reappraising things unnatural, tame, and confined*

*in terms of things natural, wild, and free."*

His words are ones we all need to contemplate from time to time.

The early on again/off again spring had great effects on anyone growing plants and crops outdoors, from golf courses to gardens. That includes those who harvest sap from Wisconsin's maple woods.

There was little sap flowing when the season started, due simply to the balmy temperatures, compliments of El Nino. The fear was the delay would be such that the sap would flow when the trees were budding, a process that changes the flavor of the syrup; such a product is called "buddy" syrup.

This comes in a season following a small harvest in 1996. Producers expected good prices this year since ice storms ravaged the heavy production areas of New England, New York and Quebec. Wisconsin ranks fifth in syrup volume based on last year's crop.

The snow on March 8 and 9 offered a chance of recovery. The bad weather was as welcome to sugarcane operators as it was to some golf course superintendents!

The Internet isn't a mass medium yet, but you'd never believe that if you lived in one Wisconsin town.

Madison is the most Internet wired city in the U.S., according to a new survey by a consumer research firm — International Demographics. The firm found that 49% of Madison's citizens are wired to the Net, putting it ahead of D.C., Silicon Valley, Boston and other hi tech cities of the country.

I'm still underwhelmed by the

medium myself, although it is, on occasion, useful. The Noernet sees some activity and it would be interesting to know what percent of the WGCSA membership routinely uses this new communication technology.

Another of Wisconsin's naturalists was honored on February 3, 1998, at his home and final resting place in Martinez, California. The United States Postal Service issued a 32-cent stamp that day in honor of John Muir. The official release of the stamp

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took place in the National Park Service Visitor Center at the Muir site. The stamp is shown here.



Year-end (1997) golf course statistics from the National Golf Foundation crossed my desk in mid-March. They always amaze and impress me, primarily because of the way the Midwest in general and Wisconsin in particular shape up in the world of golf.

Wisconsin finished 1997 in fifth place in new golf course openings with 19. The Middlewest dominates with Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Minnesota also falling in the top 10. Wisconsin now has 489 golf courses,

placing it in tenth place among the states. Florida is first. As of December 31, 1997, Wisconsin had another 29 golf courses under construction, putting us in tenth place in that department. Golf is healthy here.

The NGF survey revealed some other interesting facts:

1. It took an average of 21.5 months for the 18-hole regulation facilities that opened in 1997 to go from ground-breaking to ribbon-cutting.

2. The majority (85%) of all courses built in 1997 were public — either daily fee or muni. This is a trend that has continued for 50 years. Seventy percent of all courses in America today are open to the public.

3. The average weekend fee for public courses opening in 1997 was \$57. It included a cart. The average weekend fee for all public courses was \$37.

4. Twenty percent of all courses built in 1997 were 9-hole stand alone facilities. Overall, 9-holers account for 30% of U.S. golf courses.

I've never kept my admiration for Governor Tommy Thompson a secret. He's a small town guy who has worked hard for Wisconsin for decades, has led our state to great prosperity, tackled big problems head on and solved them, and he may run for an unprecedented fourth term. He can almost walk on water.

But what he needs to do is walk on some grass, real grass. He's instructed a state building commission member, Rep. Tim Hoven, to head a task force to look into the possibility of replacing Camp Randall Stadium's artificial turf with grass. The current artificial turf is nearing the end of its useful life and there will be an opportunity to make the switch in the next few years. By the year 2000, projections are that only Wisconsin and Minnesota will have artificial surfaces for football.

Tommy wants input — "sports fans, tell us how you feel about it," he said on March 19th.

OK. Here's what I think. Leave it with an artificial surface. It's a busy  
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field — concerts, Big 10 football, collegiate soccer games, intramural sports, high school football games, UW Marching Band practices, and more. The field would be mud by mid-September. One rainy game and the field could be trashed for the rest of the season. I've seen it happen to Lambeau Field more than a few times. A game between two teams playing in the mud is hardly a keen competitive event. The UW Marching Band is one of the country's best; I would hate to see them charge onto the field in white spats to put on a halftime show ankle deep in mud. I am not exaggerating.

I clearly remember when the field was grass. During my undergraduate years in the 1960s it was ugly, and Peter Miller had me drive an IH 240 tractor and a John Bean sprayer from Nakoma to Camp Randall to spray it in mid-summer for brown patch. It was in poor shape even when it wasn't in use. I'd not have confidence circumstances would be any different these days.

Arguments are made that grass fields reduce injuries. That is likely true, but I am not aware that UW athletes suffer anymore injuries than those from colleges playing on grass. I think it is more a function of how "soft" the artificial field is.

Wisconsin football coach Barry Alvarez opposes a change from artificial turf to grass, and AD Pat Richter says he is "open" to the idea. If you want to express your opinion to the governor, call 266-121 and let him know what you think.

## DON'T FORGET TO MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

**Who:** You

**What:** WTA's Summer Field Day

**Where:** O.J. Noer Turfgrass Facility

**When:** Wednesday, August 12, 1998



Registration information will be arriving within the next several weeks. If you have questions, contact Audra at 608-845-6536.



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We attended the snow mold field day at the Noer Facility on April 6; it was a worthwhile couple of hours.

The Noer has a different look that time of the year, which inspired lots of questions for professors Kussow and Stier, who were both in attendance.

We checked out Jeff Gregos' extensive snow mold plots, and then looked at different grass varieties as they came out of winter, learned of Wayne's runoff experiences from



Jeff Gregos had a captive audience, albeit a small one. The Noer meeting included faculty Kussow, Stier and Andrews in the foreground.

spring rains and snow melt, and studied some of the bentgrass work.

I haven't heard how attendance was at the other venues, but those who missed the one at the Noer missed a very worthwhile event.

He's been under the weather of late. If you'd like to send him a card or a note, here is his address:

Charles F. Koval  
3406 Viburnum Drive  
Madison, WI 53705

Dr. Chuck Koval spent decades in UW Extension, helping people like you and me with turfgrass insect problems.

That's it. Enjoy these best days of Wisconsin weather. As Garrison Keillor says, "Be brave, be cheerful and look for the best." 🍷



We got John Stier started talking about *Poa supina*; he knows more about it than anyone else in the country.

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