

Does Another Long Season Signal a Big Change?

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

November isn't a favorite month for many people - it is stark and cold and lonely, they say. Not so, I say.

It is a month when finally we can think about leading a normal life. It is ushered in by Halloween, a colorful holiday of teepee shaped bundles of corn stalks, glowing orange pumpkins and kids trick or treating. November is a time of hearth fires in our homes, apple cider and pumpkin pies and new red potatoes, and a return to standard time. And it is the month when our ancestors started the traditions of feasting and public prayer and thanksgiving. Nowadays it is one of our favorite holidays.

What a year this has been for those of us who toil on a golf course. Early start (March), brutal mid-summer weather, no rain in September and October, and players on the course well into the final days of the year. The fall color was beautiful late, when we feasted on the oaks and the larch. There were no misty mornings this fall, and no killing frosts either, until late October. Birds were slow to go south, the wind blew most of the time in October, leaves were a problem we were still dealing with into November, and the players of Wisconsin are nigh well onto getting spoiled by these long, long golf seasons. The lack of rainfall delayed the decision to purge irrigation systems; pulling the trigger made many of us nervous as we looked back and forth between the calendar and the dry conditions.

It was a year of sadness. We lost two good friends and colleagues. The end of the century forces us to think about maintaining the excel-

lence of our chapter without the presence of Gene Haas.

A host of new pests have made themselves known. The Asian longhorn beetle, the Japanese beetle, the zebra mussel, the gypsy moth, and gray leafspot all are potentially serious problems for golf courses. There are more attempts to pass intrusive bureaucratic rules for us to follow. Global warming and a changing climate are in the news. No wonder I am tired!

So, these days around Thanksgiving and Christmas are times to set aside the troubling unknowns of the future and focus on homes and families and some

vacation time. Do your best to enjoy them.

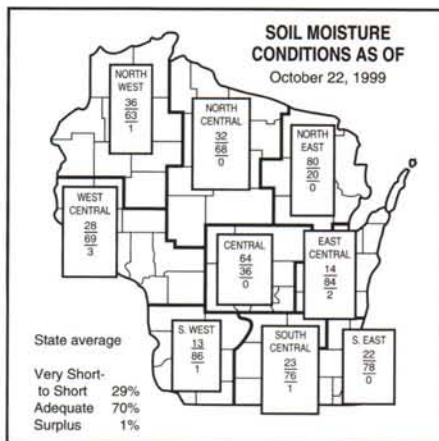
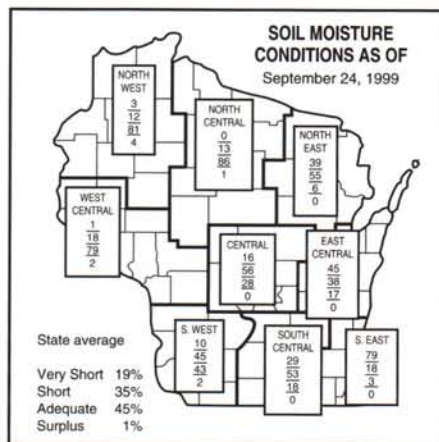
Some have accused me of obsession with the weather. Obsessed is a bit strong, I think. I would accept "interested." Why shouldn't all of us be interested (or even obsessed) with the weather? It has enormous impact on our lives.

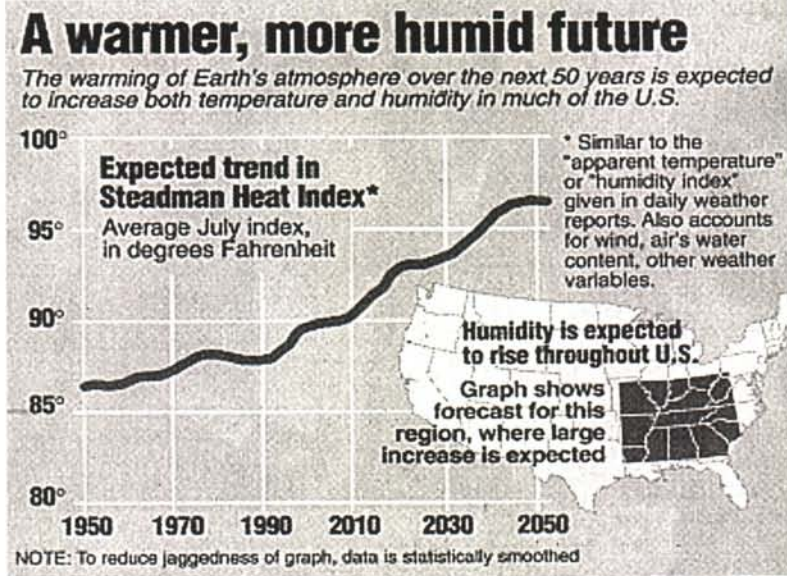
So it is no wonder I was interested in what the head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had to say about the upcoming winter weather.

The La Nina weather phenomenon is expected by NOAA to change the strength and pattern of the Pacific jet stream over North America and bring the Midwest more rain and snow than we normally get.

"We expect considerable month-to-month variation in temperature, rainfall and storminess in the Central, Northern and Eastern states, which means days of warmer-than-normal temperatures followed by bouts of bitter cold," the agency said in an October 26th press release. Here is their more 'detailed' forecast: High degree of uncertainty. Considerable variability from week to week with above normal temperatures in southern areas and closer to normal in the north. Above normal snowfall in northern Great Lakes. Near normal precipitation south and east of the Appalachians.

The Weather Service says it has improved the forecasting of La Nina and El Nino so that they can predict related events and their expected climatic impacts with 70 to 80 percent accuracy a year before they occur.





I could go for a lot of snow this winter.

The federal government's first study of global warming and its potential effects that takes into account increased humidity conclude that the heat blast they are predicting will bring on some serious dog days that will cause the heat index - a measure of discomfort that takes into account both heat and humidity - to soar. The next 50 to 60 years will see this kind of change.

Plugging humidity into their computer models of global warming, federal scientists determined that in the next half-century the average summer heat index is going to be near 100 degrees for much of the country. Fortunately, we are not in that part of the country.

What is now the occasional super hot-and-sticky day will probably become the average day in the south and east. Their weather will be very hot and sticky. But we will be experiencing more uncomfortable days here, too, but to a slightly lesser degree.

Although there is considerable argument about it, the convention-

al wisdom says that the average temperature will rise somewhere between three and eight degrees F. as carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere double. When humidity is factored in, that translates to a seven to ten degree increase in the heat index.

Really, no one should be surprised. One of the first things you learn in an beginning meteorology course is that the hotter it gets, the more moisture the air retains. In other words, hotter temps mean higher humidity.

Finally, we have a turfgrass pathologist at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He is Dr. Geunhwa Jung, and he accepted the position when it was offered to him on October 21st. Dr. Jung was one of the four finalists who were invited in for interviews. Those interviews, by the way, included members of the turfgrass industry, thanks to Profs. Maxwell, Stevenson and Andrews.

A native of South Korea, Geunhwa earned his undergrad degree in Horticulture at Chungnam National University in South Korea in 1988, a MS and PhD from the University of

Nebraska - Lincoln. For the past several years he has been a post-doctoral research assistant in Dr. Jim Nienhaus' lab at the UW - Madison.

He is an enthusiastic person who has published a number of scientific articles. You'll have the chance to meet and visit with him at the 2000 Turfgrass EXPO in Middleton in early January. You'll like him.

Just about the time you think Americans are the only citizens of the world who like to sue one another for every frivolous incident under the sun, you read about a lawsuit brought by a golfer in Scotland

A Scottish woman is suing the country club she belongs to after a golf ball she hit bounced off a nearby rock and hit her, leaving her blind in one eye.

She told a court in Aberdeen that the stone was hidden in the rough along the fairway at Westhill Golf Club near Aberdeen. She claimed the course manager was to blame because the course was badly designed and maintained.

The hearing was continued. That sounds familiar, too!

So, here it is, ladies and gentlemen, the final issue of The Grass Roots of this century. What a staggering thought. My grandparents Miller were both born in the last century and Grandma Miller almost made it into what would have been her third century. To put it into perspective, remember that golf is just barely a century old in America!

A lot has happened in the last century. We are incapable of envisioning what the next one will bring to mankind. My new year (and new century) wish is that all of you get off to a great start. Happy holidays. ♣