

Despite Heat and Humidity in July, Wisconsin Superintendents Persevere

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

What started out as an early and excellent year for Wisconsin golf courses turned ugly in July, just about the time the summer weather turned hot and humid. Really hot and really humid.

Although the worst days were at the end of the month - the 30th was the worst day in our area with heat indices in the 115 degree range - tough weather actually started before the Fourth. By the time it was over, July was one of our hottest ever and extended to 20 the number of consecutive months above normal in temperatures.

Pythium, brown patch, root suffocation, heat damage - the results

were all the same. Older courses suffered most from the heat because of the higher *Poa annua* population. Higher budget courses could handle disease outbreaks better, but no amount of money mitigates the effects of high heat and humidity. In isolated areas the problems were exacerbated by excessive rainfall which only added to the troubles.

It was all discouraging, but for veteran superintendents the scene was a repeat from previous years and we can tell you with absolute certainty that it will happen again. The summer of '99 will remind me most of '95 except that year was

one of greater duration of the heat and humidity. But the years of '88 and '76 were as hot or hotter and they were accompanied by a drought. The story I like best involves Cherokee's George Magnin. He's always upbeat and positive, but on the afternoon of the 30th he was more than concerned, especially as he checked out the putting green near the clubhouse. He went into the kitchen, asked the chef for a meat thermometer and went back to the putting green. At a depth of 1/2 inch, the temperature was 140 degrees: *beef - medium!*

Golf turf suffered. So did most

*Custom Verti-Drain with MST
Schedule today
(800) 743-2419*

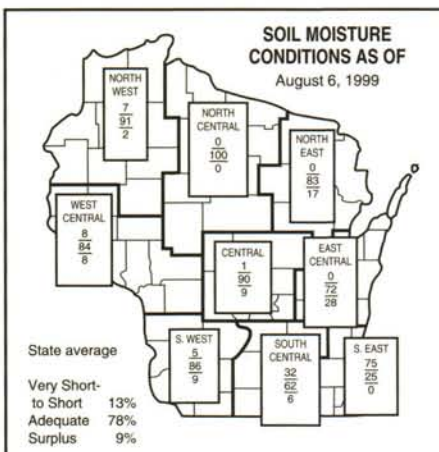
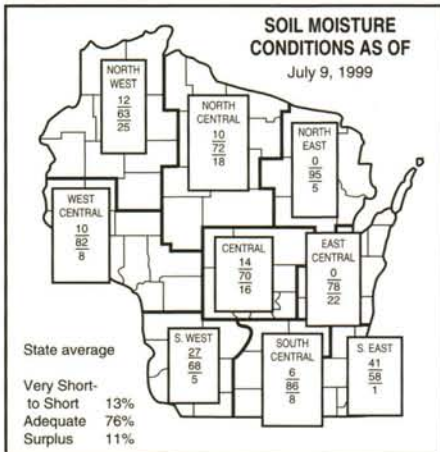
Serving the Midwest since 1989

other agricultural enterprises. From disease, just like us. From high temperatures, just like us. Animal agricultural - dairying - is very vulnerable during heat extremes. Production from dairy cows drops dramatically during heat waves like the 11 days at the end of July, and at its worst, animals were dying at a frightening rate.

The heat had a human toll, as well, taking the lives of nearly a dozen people in Wisconsin, including one here in our town.

The good news from this was the weather turned to our favor in August. The weather change, along with some alterations in management, put most courses on the road to recovery.

The Wisconsin Ag Stat summaries are here for your review.



Lately, in terms of recent years, we all seem to be either searching for or offering up theories about the oddball weather events we have been having. It has been everything from mild weather, flooding, heat, extreme cold, short winters, tornadoes, droughts and all the rest. We have heard El Nino, La Nina, global warming and all that. There has been no shortage of climate change theories. New scientific data seems to have generated a lot of the theories advanced. Or so I thought.

I was doing some reading and came across an interesting bit of information you might appreciate. It seems that during the first two centuries of settlement of the American seaboard, a popular misconception arose about the observed climate. Residents wondered where the record snowfalls of yesteryear had gone. They weren't having the harsh winters that their grandfathers and great-grandfathers spoke about. Amateur observers and philosophers pondered these questions and offered a variety of answers.

Sound familiar? Though they had no actual facts to offer, most colonists believed that the weather had grown milder and that the springs came earlier and autumns lasted longer.

Dr. Hugh Williamson of North Carolina expressed these ideas in an article he wrote for the very

first issue of *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* in 1771. His article was titled "An attempt to account for the climate change observed in the Middle Colonies in North America."

Dr. Williamson's thesis was that the cutting down of the forests for farms and settlements had produced a warming of the soil for two reasons. First, the falling of the trees allowed easterly winds to penetrate more deeply into the country, bringing temperate marine influences inland. Second, the bare soil received and stored more solar heat than did forested land, and snow melted more quickly when exposed to direct sunlight.

In addition, some colonials suggested that the rise of urban communities with heated buildings and smokepots were leading to a milder climate. They claimed the same thing had happened in Europe.

These were the first ideas of many over the succeeding decades about climate change. Even today, with satellites and monitoring equipment, the change theories are still that - theories.

And mysteries.

I received the following humorous photo from Dave VanAuken, the talented superintendent at Timber Stone in Iron Mountain in the UP. Dave's golf course crew found the big bull thistle in a rock drainage ditch on their 17th hole.

TURF BOXES

Manufactured in
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Specify **AMETEK** —
A Wisconsin Product!

The trunk circumference was seven inches! And the darn thing was 10' 2" tall.

It was bigger than some ever-green Christmas trees, so the crew decorated it with Christmas ornaments! Bill Kehoss, assistant superintendent, is 6'2" tall, and the edge of an 8' walk-in door is barely visible on the right of the tree.

The guys at Pine Mountain have a sense of humor. By the way, Dave will be on the Symposium program this fall in Milwaukee.

Kudos to:

1. Staff and faculty at the Noer Facility for a terrific field day. The WTA board members and committee people who helped plan it deserve a lot of credit, too. Many who would know remarked it was one of the best they've attended anywhere at anytime.

2. Danny Quast and his crew for a successful PGA championship. Not many course managers can claim hosting two of the four major championships. Great job.

3. Rob Schultz, sports writer for The Capital Times, wrote an excellent article about the damaged and diseased turf on Wisconsin golf courses. He was thorough and articulate, like always. We owe him a big thanks for always helping us. The article was titled "Summer of Discontent."

Let me see if I've got this right: Hillary Clinton now says the fact that her husband is a womanizer and cheater and has shacked up with other women during their marriage is his grandma's fault. Would that be instead of the right wing conspiracy she blamed a year ago?

Please, Hill. Slick is not a "good, very, very good" person or president. He's a convicted liar, a philanderer and has no problem breaking promises. By most defin-



"Christmas in July"

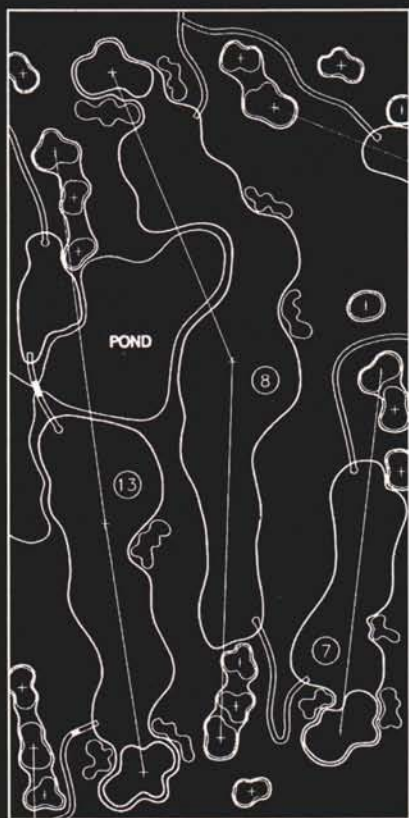
itions that makes him a scumbag.

And Hillary's run at the Senate seat for New York State makes her a carpetbagger. I hope the Empire Staters can see through her. Her choice to not only stick with Slick, but to promote him, shows her to be a person of very poor judgment and very low self esteem. New Yorkers could do a lot better than her.

Autumn is my favorite time of the year; from the dusty colors of blue chicory, Queen Anne's lace and goldenrod to the bright colors of maple and sumac, it is a time when the outdoors offers unsurpassed beauty. I plan on relaxing during some afternoons in Camp Randall and Lambeau Field, maybe I will find time for a trip to see the fall foliage display in New England, or continue my search for the philosophers stone.

Autumn was meant to be enjoyed. Please do. ♡

HERFORD • NORBY



GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE



(612)942-0266 (612)942-0197 Fax