

Nature Roars; Wisconsin Superintendents Suffer



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

Severe weather and lots of moisture marked the months of May and June in Wisconsin. Eastern Wisconsin was hit by a storm featuring wind and rain and hail around May 12th. Southern Wisconsin was hammered by a whopper of a storm with hail and rain and wind on May 18th. The hail was the size of golf balls and turned our course and others in Dane county into a winterlike wonderland. It didn't last long - the hail ended after 15 minutes and melted in a few hours. Moisture before the hail had softened greens and it was scary to see them after the ice melted - they left ballmarks. We rolled them first and after the second mowing it was difficult to detect any damage at all.

Urban areas receiving hail were covered with shredded leaves, damaged trees and dented cars. The rain that was part of the storm brought six and more inches of rain in some places in southern Wisconsin.

More storms hit the state on May 31st, driving

Madison's May total to 9.53 inches. That was enough rain to establish a new record. The old record was 9.35 inches of precip in May of 1933. We probably set a record for the tonnage of sand put back in place in the sand bunkers of Wisconsin golf courses!

It wasn't just the rain the storms brought that caused trouble. Wind, flooding, and lightning raised havoc on our courses. WGCSA members were clearing fairways and roughs of everything from carp to cornstalks. Chainsaws were chewing through downed limbs and trees. And the wind not only dropped tress and branches, it caused power outages and shoreline damage. We will have plenty to do to restore the shore at our Lake Mendota pump station.

The little Vernon county village of Victory had nearly ten inches of rain for May 30th and 31st. Baraboo had nearly seven inches, Platteville recorded about six and a half inches, and a bunch of other towns and cities

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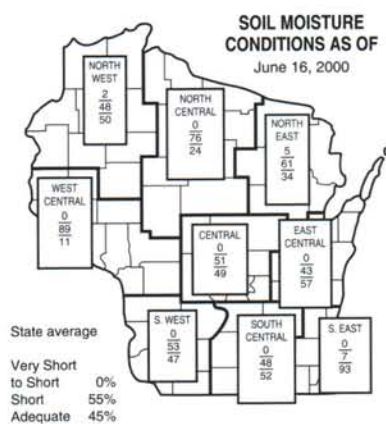
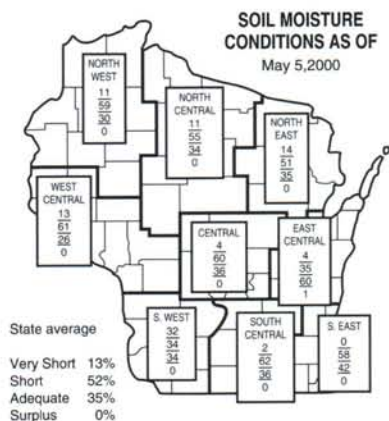
were at five inches of rain. We basically got two months of rain in two days. Year-to-date totals were twice the normal amount expected. At its worst, Lake Mendota was 31.5 inches above its maximum summer height, breaking the 1933 record of 25.5 inches. Currents in rivers and streams were running at 10 to 20 times their typical volume.

The financial impact is tremendous and expressed in cleanup and repair costs as well as lost revenue for green fees, bar sales and restaurant sales.

Mid-June saw more rain - two to three inches in our area, exacerbating our problems. Poor Walworth, Racine and Kenosha - their tallies ran into the four and five inch range. A week later? More rain. Enough rain, in fact, for the Feds to declare some of Wisconsin's counties official disaster areas. Somehow I doubt any of us will reap any relief from that program.

Sad about the whole deal is the forecast from a few months ago - a drought for 2000. It may get dry over the next months of 2000, but surface waters and aquifers are surely recharged now.

The facts tell the story and are illustrated by the information from the folks at the Wisconsin Ag Stats Service.



Speaking of facts, here are some from a report of the National Climatic Data Center. The spring of 2000

was the hottest on record for the U.S. Meteorological spring - March through May - averaged 55.5 degrees F. over the U.S., 0.4 degrees warmer than the previous record set in 1910.

The report also said we experienced the hottest January - May in 106 years of record keeping. Both numbers will stir anew the debate about global warming and whether or not mankind can influence it.

In our region - East North Central - the average temp this spring was 47.4 degrees, a dramatic 4.1 degrees above the average temperature of 43.3 degrees.

Globally, land and ocean surface temperatures were also warmer than normal, tying 1990 as the second warmest spring on record.

It is pretty unusual for every state in the U.S. to have above normal temperatures like this past spring. That has to be a clue to something.

Frankly, I have been aggravated by the lack of competition among distributors who call on me when it comes to certain products - they all charge exactly the same price. There is bristling when the words "price fixing" are brought into the conversation. They call it "agency pricing."

I made a few inquiries about agency pricing or an agency program (as it is also called). It differs from a distributor program in that when the distributor buys product from a manufacturer or a formulator, the distributor is free to resell those products to end users like you and me at any price or on any terms that the distributor decides on.

In an agency program, the manufacturer sells the product directly to the end users. The distributor does not buy and never owns those products. So the manufacturer sets the price. The distributor acts as an "agent" for the manufacturer, soliciting business for the manufacturer, delivering the product for it and performing any other required services (product complaints, for example).

Regardless of how many "agents" a manufacturer may have, the price remains the same everywhere with every agent because the deal is between you and the manufacturer. The distributor does not input on the price.

Now, is that clear?

I guess I will remember the 2000 US Open primarily as the time that Robert Trent Jones passed away. He died Wednesday night, June 14, the eve of the Open. Had he lived six more days, he would have reached 94 years.

Mr. Jones suffered a stroke a year ago and had been in declining health since then. In his career, during which he became known as the "father of modern architecture," Jones created or rebuilt over 400 golf courses in 34 countries. Two of the are in Wisconsin - The Springs in Spring Green and the Madeline Island Golf Course in La Pointe. I believe he also did some remodeling at Milwaukee CC.

Most golf course superintendents have a memory or two of Robert Trent Jones. I have two special ones. He was a speaker at our Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium a number of years ago and I was able to chat with him, mainly about architects who were at their prime when he was in his younger years - Ross, Tillinghast, etc. The other occasion was at a luncheon during the GCSAA conference in Orlando time before last. He was more than happy to autograph some books for me and to, again, talk about America's pioneers of golf course architecture. Those are great moments to remember.

Jones' courses have served host to 79 national championships, including 20 US Opens and 12 PGA championships.

Anybody who saw the tribute to Payne Stewart before the 2000 US Open had to be touched. Stewart was a two-time US Open champ who was killed in a plane crash last fall.

Two groups of players responded to the command "ready, aim, fire" by hitting golf balls into the Pacific Ocean from the jagged coastline at the 18th fairway at Pebble Beach. What a sight - a 21-tee shot salute. You'll never see it again.



A 21-tee shot salute to Payne Stewart at the US Open on Wednesday, June 14, 2000.

The Badgers play a regular season football game in August; it seems impossible, doesn't it? It should be an exciting season in Camp Randall. The Badgers are ranked by some "experts" as the third best football team in the country, behind Nebraska and Florida State. They have, by some accounts, the best defensive line and the best defensive secondary in the country. The team has some outstanding individual players and even though Ron Dayne is gone, there are some good ones coming up to take his place.

The anticipation of a new football season may help make the tough summer months of July and August pass more quickly. I hope these months find your course in excellent shape and you in good spirits. 🌿

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