

# The Big Push Has Started

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

Like spring almost always is, spring 2000 in Wisconsin has been capricious and undependable. From the early opening dates in the first week of March with 70 degrees F. temperatures to the blizzard on April 7, Wisconsin golf course superintendents were operating by fits and starts. There would be 50 players one day and two the next, numbers dictated solely by the weather. Not until mid- to late April did golf really unwind.

And like superintendents who were operating with certain apprehension, players headed onto courses longingly but without their midseason confidence. They have stiff muscles, not used since December for golf unless it was for a Florida or Arizona vacation. But they were a happy lot, at our course anyway, despite brownish turf, leafless trees, harsh winds and highcut greens. Like us, golf players are anxious for the warmer, sweeter days of May and June.

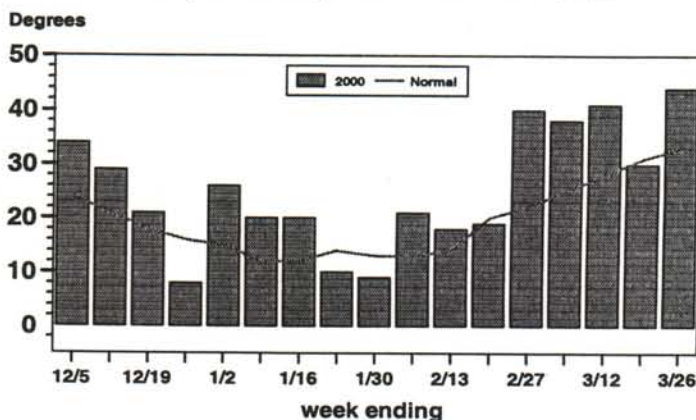
You must always look for the silver lining, and the unusually dry weather of March and the first half of April was a great time for any

construction projects. We used the time for new tee construction on the fourth hole and some utility work. And the dry weather catalyzed irrigation system start-ups that were a month or six weeks earlier than "normal", whatever that is anymore. Stats from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service tell the story of dry soils all across Wisconsin.

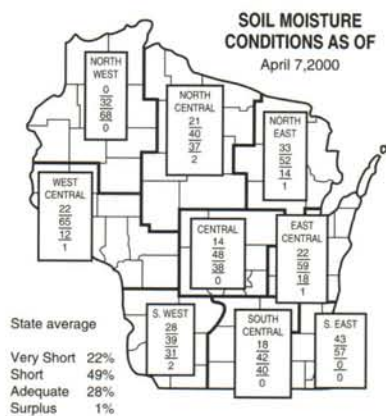
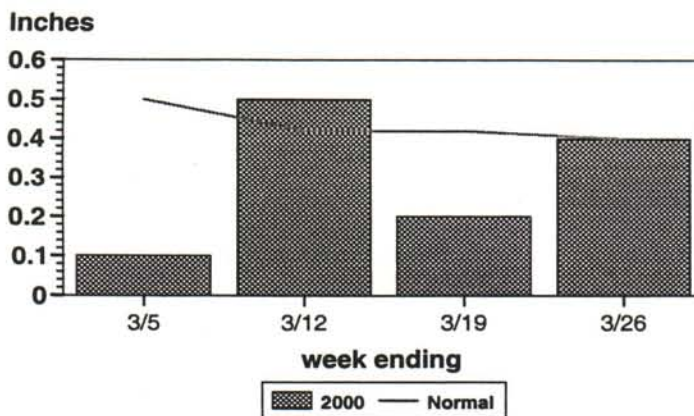
This might also be the earliest I

have ever been aggravated by the TV meteorologists. Not only have forecasts been off the accuracy mark by a country mile, but they already have been directing their irritating chatter to the spectator sport crowd, commuters and even golfers. Will they ever realize that agriculturalists like us NEED rain once in awhile, even if it slightly inconveniences some of the aforementioned? Golf courses, lawns and

**Winter Temperature Profile for Wisconsin**  
Weekly State Average For 2000 & 30-Year Normal



**March Precipitation for Wisconsin**  
Weekly State Average For 2000 & 30-Year Normal



farm fields do well with an occasional shower! So we are still waiting for some April showers to get us off to a good start for summer.

In no time at all, usually sometime in May, we will be overwhelmed with grass, grass, grass. And the powerful cosmetic effect mowing has on golf courses will

remind us, again, of why we like this business.

Despite lousy forecasts, drought and a labor shortage!

Cubby O'Brien should be flattered by the letter I received from Trygve Ekern back in March. He is

obviously reading Cub's column, Poa trivia.

*Mr. Monroe S. Miller  
Editor, THE GRASS ROOTS  
Blackhawk Country Club  
P.O. Box 5129  
Madison, WI 53705*

*Dear Mr. Miller,*

*I would like to take a minute to correct the last issue's "Poa trivia" section. The question from the previous issue read, "When was the first metal wood introduced and by which company?"*

*While Taylor Made led the way in modern metal wood design, the concept of "metal" woods is not very recent. The earliest metal wood was invented and patented by Englishman William Mills in 1896. Mr. Mills' aluminum head with a wood core was instrumental in the formation and success of The Standard Golf Company as an international supplier of golf clubs. While the introduction of Taylor Made's wood in 1979 was significant in the evolution of modern-day metal woods, it was by no means the first metal wood invented. Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this.*

*Sincerely,*

*Trygve R. Ekern*

*Assistant Golf Course  
Superintendent*

*Bristlecone Pines Golf Club*

Cubby stands corrected. And I promise I won't call you Mr. Ekern if you don't call me Mr. Miller!

A little credit is in order here. I mentioned Badger Creeping Red Fescue in the cover introduction. In case you didn't know, there really is a Badger Creeping Red Fescue available for purchase.

Last year, Badger ranked #1 of



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all creeping red fescues evaluated in the National Fine Leaf Fescue Trials on overall performance, and it ranked #2 of all fine leaf fescues evaluated in the same trials on overall performance.

Badger offers excellent turf density throughout the entire season and has outstanding resistance to dollar spot, brown patch, red thread and leaf spot. It ranked in the top four in the aforementioned trials for genetic color (dark green).

It is a Scotts product, but it is available from a lot of different distributors. Clearly, it is a winner variety, and it has an entirely appropriate name, from another winner - the Badgers. And the name came from the fertile imagination of a proud Badger alum whom we all know - Wayne Horman!

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will spray various areas of Wisconsin - 85,000 acres - for gypsy moths again this year, probably sometime in May. Wisconsin was recently awarded a \$2 million grant to fight the moth, money from the U.S. Forest Service. Their choice of insecticide is B. t. k.

We witnessed the application from our course last season. It is an aerial application, with the plane flying just above treetops early in the morning.

Naturally, some complain. But there were no reports of anyone exceedingly sick from the B.t. It can cause minor skin and eye irritation for some, a fair risk for the alternative - millions and millions of gypsy moths eating and stripping every leaf on every tree in your yard.

There are some big changes underway for the first Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium of the new century. Scheduled for November

14 and 15, it will convene at the Sheraton Brookfield.

The subject couldn't be more timely - sand bunkers.

The new format gets at, I presume, keeping an audience on the second day. It will open with an afternoon session on the 14th and offer a full day on the 15th. A workshop is going to be offered on Tuesday morning for a separate fee and on an unrelated topic. Wednesday morning will feature a breakfast buffet and a special speaker. The remnant from the previous format will be the WGCSA election on Tuesday afternoon.

I realize nothing is firm, but speakers under consideration rate top notch. And the change should really help the Wednesday attendance problem. The changes, if the committee can get the schedule set, will get my approval and applause.

Over the course of the next couple of issues, you will get to read some thoughts about the GCSAA PDI that comes for regular members, both from our chapter and from other chapters. They are refreshing pieces, especially since they don't take the GCSAA line.

I still laugh over the "member driven" reference they use. In the broad sense, it simply is not true. And when someone - anyone - uses that tact to begin to sell something, they lose a lot of people right out of the chute, even if the idea has merit. It reminds me of Nixon and Clinton who never learned that the cover-up is usually more damaging than the crime.

It is important to remain open-minded on this issue. That, however, is impossible when all you read is the company line. So we are offering thoughts differing from the GCSAA pitch for your edification.

Soon these oddball days of late April will give way to the plant exuberance of May - flowering crabapple trees, lilacs, bright green grass, dogwood, tulips, bluebells and lots more. The unsettled weather will settle into more predictable patterns (I hope), we will have temperatures in the 70s and gardeners will be out in full force. Farmers' markets will be underway, the winds will die down and our golf courses will be wonderful. May and June are a great time of the year to be a golf course superintendent in Wisconsin. Don't miss them! ♣

