



Normal, Wisconsin

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

Our Club's annual meeting was on December 7 last month. It was cold and windy, and the wind chill made all of us gasp when we drew in our fresh breath of that cold air. The golf course had a thin blanket of snow and the clubhouse was decorated beautifully for Christmas. Mr. Stolper, past president twice removed, reminded me that on the day of the annual meeting he presided over in 1998 we were still playing golf! Indeed, we paved a golf cart earlier in that week of 1998. What a change in weather one can see in two years. In fact, before Thanksgiving 2000 we had to head out to the course and chase away an iceskater who was slapping a hockey puck around the frozen pond in front of our fifth hole.

The four winters that preceded this one were seasons of warmer temperatures that were shorter in length. People come to expect it, I guess, and forget that this is more near normal than they were. Wisconsin's average winter temperature is 17 degrees F., but the last four winters were significantly above that. Last year the average temperature was 21 degrees F.

As we have all learned, El Nino and La Nina weather patterns move into Wisconsin every seven or so years and give us mild winters. Fortunately, several years of mild winters are usually followed by normal winters. That is what we are experiencing now. It may even be that the mild winter of last year that led to our earliest opening ever will lead to a severe winter this year. We will soon know. Even the Old Farmer's Almanac predicted a colder winter for Wisconsin this year; the Almanac is almost

always right! Adding to the evidence of a strong winter is the fact that Milwaukee broke its record for the most snow ever in December. Super!

Winter is, after the Christmas and New Year's holidays, a waiting time. The tempo is slowed up and weather has enforced some seclusion on us. We are, in a real sense, waiting for spring and a new golf season. But the waiting is productive - professional meetings like the WTA Expo and the GCSAA conference are on the horizon. The waiting time is spent behind reel and bedknife grinders, over engines and in offices. The change of pace is an entirely pleasant one.

For now. In a short time, however, in the sunny day of February, there are few among us who aren't a little antsy, a little anxious, even a little apprehensive as we sense that the arrival of spring isn't not far away.

I heard from Bill Roberts at

Christmas. He and the family are doing well. Pat is still working in the medical field. The three oldest girls are now out of high school and Caitlin is four. Willie works some for the PGA, has ties to golf course management near Marquette, Michigan, and is finishing law school. He will take the bar exam in February, and I am assuming he will not then be in a law office behind an ambulance. I think he will do better than that!

As evidence that time flies, he and Pat celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary this past year!

Deer hunting is the fifth season in Wisconsin and it is a bigger event than many realize. This year's deer hunting season in the Badger State yielded a record harvest of over 600,000, ranking it first all time for the bow/gun whitetail kill among all states. We also hold 3rd place (1999; 494,116), 9th place (1995; 467,100) and 10th place (1996; 460,524).

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Although I didn't participate, our shop was responsible for its share of the harvest. Chad Grimm shot a 10 point buck that is now at the taxidermist. So did our association prez. Kris Pinkerton took a 10 point, 160# buck with a 16" spread, non-typical, in Bayfield county on November 21st. He also is going to have it mounted.

Congratulations to all who were successful.

As we get sharpening and grinding equipment up and running, we

may be more inclined to give a second look to a new piece of mowing equipment that would require sharpening. It was developed by the Wolf and Garden Company in Germany.

For \$30,000 you could buy a mower that cuts grass with a laser. Clearly, this machine demonstrates that the future is here, and it may not be long before such technology is made available by the big U.S. turf equipment manufacturing companies. The photo below shows you this new age machine.



It is a great relief that the presidential election is over. It is an even greater relief for the half of the voters (which includes me) who voted for Governor Bush. I could not imagine trading Slick Willie's dishonesty, immorality and lack of ethics for Gore's phoniness and lack of sincerity. The guy comes across to me as a fraud. If you read Gore's book - *The Earth in Balance* - and study Lieberman's record on issues that affect us, it becomes clear we will likely have a better chance of a fair deal from Bush.

Dubya may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but his more rational approach to problem solving will suit more of us than Al Gore ever would.

So far I am not aware that there is any substantial ice accumulation anywhere in the state. Ice is the most likely culprit in the winterkill of golf turf, so we can breathe easily. With the cold and snow, it appears that we will finally have a trademark Wisconsin winter.

Hooray! 🌿

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