

Autumn Brings Relief From A Tough Summer

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

It was a difficult year for golf courses in many parts of Wisconsin. Many of us suffered from a severe lack of rainfall for extended periods, and all of us experienced temperatures considerably above normal highs. The weather gave us a taste of summertime as it is known in the transition zone.

Turf diseases were rampant; I'd guess the TDL staff had their hands full at times. Budgets were exceeded, stress levels of grasses and superintendents were high, and at times our golf courses didn't look that good. I would like to say previous seasons like this one make it easier to tolerate for a seasoned superintendent like myself, but I cannot. I am worn out physically and mentally like everybody else.

BUT, September is here. The dog days are gone and any run of sweltering days will be of short duration. There will be early mornings soon when work on the course will require a light jacket or a sweatshirt.

It is a great time of the year. The red color of sumac and ripe tomatoes and the Badger football jerseys against the green grass of September is a sight to behold! So are woodbine and Viburnum berries. Summer annuals still bloom in September, but the mums remind us that the Fall Equinox is nearly here. September is a break in the seasons – not quite summer but not quite fall, either. It is transition time, days when golf course work becomes enjoyable again.

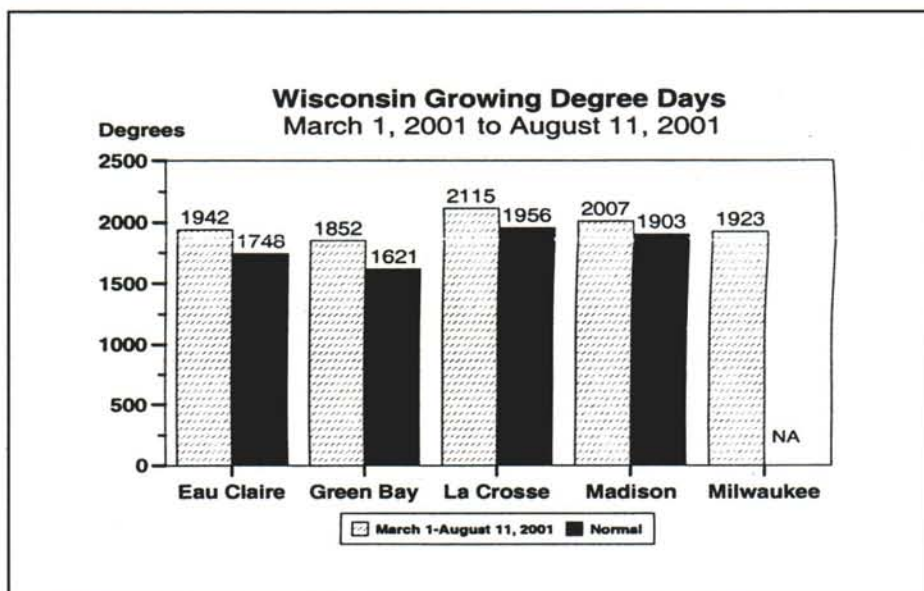
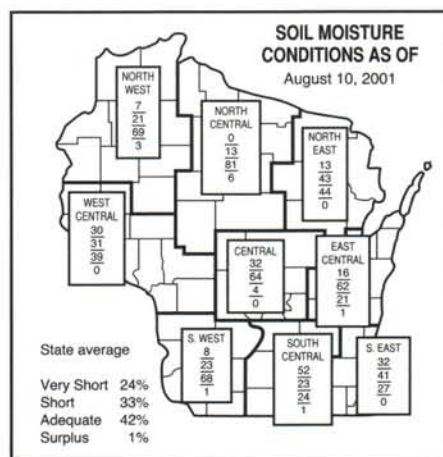
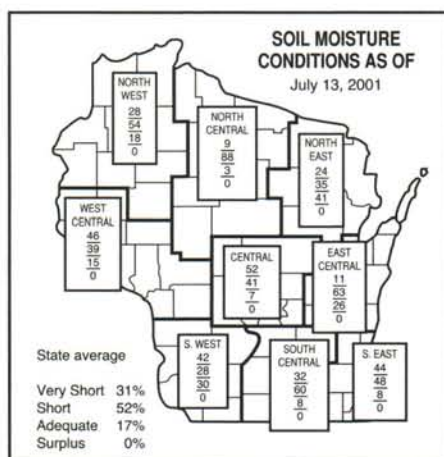
For sure, the workload isn't any less. In fact, it may be greater because summer employees are back at school but the routines of summer will continue for nearly

six weeks. There will be a lot of dust rising from greens and tees and fairways as aerification gets under full sail this month.

Former farm kids like me especially like autumn because in our youth it marked the completion of the cycle of planting, cultivation and harvest. It meant corn shocks and pumpkins and third crop hay. The days were ones to savor, and that emotion says with me all these years later.

The salient weather stats from the Wisconsin Ag Statistics Service from the past two months are here for your edification.

The 2001 Wisconsin Turfgrass Field Day at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility was, well, nearly beyond description. The entire place looked great - so neat and tidy and well kept.





Club in Kennebunkport, Maine. Their hats – 41 and 43 – designate their presidencies. A safe bet is that they don't cheat at golf like slick 42 was known to do.

Two retirements this summer are worthy of mention. Both men were giants in their respective fields of study and contributed mightily to the turf industry in Wisconsin. Dr. Doug Maxwell's influence is known to all of you. Unknown by looking at him is the fact he is at retirement age. He will continue his international agriculture program for some time, but down the road you'll be able to find him nearly anytime at the Fox's Lair Golf Course.

Dr. Larry Binning's leadership as long time chairman of the Horticulture Department directly benefited us – Rossi's hiring, Stier's hiring, support at every turn for us in other departments as they filled turf positions, advocating for us in the halls of administration. We'll miss this personable guy with humble beginnings on a Wisconsin "dirt farm."

Their retirement parties were different but both were unique and singular experiences. Larry's was held on a perfect June afternoon in the O.N. Allen Centennial Gardens on campus. He was surrounded by friends and colleagues from the past 35 years. Doug and Martha secured the Wilson Street Grill, a well known downtown Madison restaurant, and were joined by family and friends from near and far to spend the evening talking about old times. Jim and Tammy Krieger were there, and Cheryl and I were honored to have dinner with Gayle and Mary Worf.

Of course, both men were honored by their departments with day long lectures and seminars covering their academic careers.

We are seeing more of Danny Quast these days, now that he has

Registration hassles were non-existent, parking was well handled and the tours were superb. Sound systems worked, the research book was worth the price of admission, and the weather could not have been better.

Time flew as professors and grad students and staff hit the high points at each stop on the tour. The signage, identification and plot definition was outstanding. I especially like the shallow boundary cuts on some of the plots; I need to find out how they do that.

And the Noer is becoming well known to Wisconsin's citizens. The

Madison newspapers have had any number of articles about the Facility in general and the Field Days in particular (that includes the Homeowner Field Day that was held on August 18th). Local television has picked up on the story, too.

This year's Field Day is really what the dream some twenty years ago was about. As a result of a lot of hard work and planning, it is living proof that dreams do come true.

The Presidents Bush love golf. The picture above was taken on July 6th at the Cape Arundel Golf



Danny Quast and Ed Devinger.



L-R: Al Vrana, Bill Sell, Andy Bertoni and Jim Latham

moved back to Wisconsin. Here are a couple of photos he shared from way back.

And from my pal Joel Jackson comes a good photo taken in Florida in April of a couple of Cornell grads with Wisconsin connections.

The upcoming winter will at least seem milder, the actual weather notwithstanding. The National Weather Service is switching to a tamer formula for calculating wind chills, one that is supposedly more accurate.

The combination of bitter cold and strong winds that generated a wind chill index of -70 degrees F. last winter will be a balmy -44 degrees F. this winter.

The old wind chill charts were based on research in Antarctica in 1945 when scientists measured how wind affects the rate at which water froze. One of the main differences with the new formula is that instead of using the wind speed measured at 33 feet above the ground, the readings will now be taken at five feet – face height they call it.



Frank Rossi and Bob Vavrek in Florida this past spring.

Theoretically the formula will now be a more realistic guide to how to bundle up since it is based on how the wind actually feels to exposed human skin.

We'll see.

There were ten 2001 Legacy Award winners chosen by GCSAA this year. Two were from Wisconsin - Natalie Lohman from Danbury and Claire Smith from Williams Bay. Natalie's father Guy is superintendent at Voyager Village Country Club and Claire's

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father Dave is the superintendent at Abbey Springs Golf Course in Fontana.

Congratulations to parents and children!

A special treat awaits you this fall as the Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium convenes at The American Club in Kohler. The program will be excellent, but then it always is. The meeting site will add immeasurably to the event. It seems impossible we will be able to stay at Wisconsin's only five-star hotel for such a reasonable rate. It is one more reason NOT to miss the highlight of our educational program.

Take a deep breath, relax and go back to enjoying the business of golf course management. Soon there will be a calmness in the air and a sense of completion will arise within you. It always happens. Summer and all the accompanying activity will fade and thoughts will turn to winter. Those thoughts are more pleasant now than they will be before long. ♣