



WEATHER

By **Marc Davison**, Golf Course Superintendent, Green Bay Country Club

One of the most popular topics of conversation is the weather. People are always commenting on "how wet it is" or "how cold it is." Don't you get tired of golfers asking you, "when will it dry up?" or "when will it cool off?" Do golfers really think we have any way of knowing? Of course not, it's just conversation. But have you ever stopped and thought about just how much weather does affect our business?

May was a very wet month and June is following the same pattern! Many parts of the state are at or near record amounts of rainfall. Many golf courses had to close holes during May and June due to flooding. Just think of the revenue impact this has on golf courses. Most of the weekends in May included rain. Public golf relies heavily on weekend play and to get washed out every weekend in a month is a terrible set back. This set back has a negative ripple effect on everything related to golf, such as golf ball sales, food and beverage sales in the clubhouse, cart revenues and greens fees.

Golf car revenue is a huge source of income for golf courses and restricting golf cars from the course impacts the bottom line in a very negative way. But when it is too wet, what can we do? No one wants the golf course torn up and muddy from cart traffic, but most owners don't want to sacrifice golf car revenue either. Having hard surface cart paths is a great luxury, especially during wet periods. Many golf courses slowly add some type of cart paths eventually. Some start with green to tee routes or other high traffic areas and although this concept is great, it doesn't help during prolonged wet periods like we saw in May. Gravel cart paths work well in level areas, but on hills they are a constant headache with the gravel constantly washing out. Pot holes seem to pop up all the time, as well. They hold water and golfers tend to then drive around these rough areas searching for a smooth ride. A continuous blacktop or concrete cart path is ideal, I'm sure everyone would agree.

Sand bunkers and rain don't normally work well together. Heavy rains wash sand off the steeper faces of bunkers. Then we have the very labor intensive job of shoveling all that sand back up onto the bunker faces, hoping it won't rain so hard next time. My staff is getting tired of shoveling sand. With the frequency of rains we received in May, one had to wonder when would it be safe and intelligent to shovel the sand back up?



Unfortunately we have numerous walk bridges that wash out each time the creek jumps out of its banks. Last week we retrieved five of these bridges that had floated down-stream and reinstalled them in their proper locations only to see a few of them take off on the following downpour four days later.

During rainy periods, like we saw in May and June, how much time do you spend looking at radar maps? Fortunately, there are many options to view radar these days. DTN (now called Meteorlogix) is very popular at golf courses, not only in the pro shop but also in the maintenance building. There are numerous weather sites on the internet to help us keep up to date on weather patterns and the Weather Channel is still very popular. I remember running up to the clubhouse 20 years ago to try and get a peek at the radar via the Weather Channel. You can spend a lot of time waiting to view radar for Wisconsin or other specific areas on the Weather Channel and with some of the other methods. Big improvement with DTN and the internet! What did you do with your old weather radio? I still have mine but can not remember the last time I used it.

Isn't it amazing how much of a factor weather has on our profession and the golf business? Weather impacts our work schedule every day. So many of our decisions are based on the weather forecast for the week, the day or even the hour. Should we start that new tee project this week even though the forecast doesn't look too good? Do we call the crew off this morning or bring them in? Do we reschedule staff to come back in at 5 p.m. to try and get caught up with the missed mowing from this morning's rain? Should we set the irrigation to run tonight or will it rain? Should we spray wetting agent this morning because it looks like rain is inevitable? The questions related to weather are endless. How often do you guess right? How often do the Meteorologists forecast correctly?

The impact weather has on the golf business is tremendous and we don't have any control over it, so we learn to cope with it the best we can. How often have you heard the saying, "if you don't like the weather stick around a few minutes and it will change?" Well it's time for a change. One and half months of rain is enough for anyone. Let's just pray that July and August are not drought months. ♣