

The Coming of the Green

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

The signs are unmistakable - March really is the first month of spring. Warm, near 60-degree F. temperatures on March 6th lulled many of us into the false expectation that we might have an early golf course opening time, again. The early arriving birds joined our winter inhabitants in boosting our thoughts of warmer days. Each warm day seems to bring a few more birds and soon enough there will be robins and bluebirds and swallows looking for food and nesting sites.

The changes in the golf course landscapes in Wisconsin are huge during the months of March and April. In this time we go from teeth-chattering cold and single digit temperatures to the warm and humid days that bring out tree leaves, the pale green of the grasses and the bursting opening of blossoms.

There are always false starts and sudden setbacks, but sometime in these months spring will turn the corner for good and we'll be on our way.

Those of us who like the outdoors have already experienced "green" this year in the form of watercress. This great salad green grows in fresh water of springs, streams and ponds. We follow the old advice; "pick water cress in a month with a "R," which makes February, March and April the months to enjoy it.

Golf shows, the Reinders conference, the ides of March, the anniversary of Noah and all the animals entering the ark, Easter, April Fools' Day, Patriots' Day and all the other notable days of March and April have to include that day we all note - Opening Day!

For some golf course superintendents in our state, the beginning of golf will bring some trepidation. The fears brought on by the ice on the first couple of days in January that was compounded by ice on the 11th and 12th of January seem to have been realized, at least in

some instances. Many of us aren't sure about that status of winterkill yet, but it seems our normal tendency to expect the worst and prepare for that. The subject of winter kill and winter injury has been discussed at green committee meetings, board meetings and informal gatherings across the state. Seed is being stockpiled, green covers are being purchased and players are being prepared for what may be an abnormal period until whatever wounds there may be are healed.

If there has been a reassuring theme that centers on advice about what to do under these circumstances, it has been "communicate, communicate, communicate." We absolutely do a great job of that among ourselves. Phone calls, professional meetings (namely LESCO and Reinders) and the Noernet have seen the sharing of information and status and advice among us in an exemplary fashion. The Turfgrass Winter Kill discussion convened at Westmoor Country Club was a stroke of genius by the organizers. Open to anyone involved in golf, including the media, it gave a chance to take home advice from the UW - Madison's John Stier and the USGA's Bob Vavrek on how to hasten recovery. However we do that, patience is the key word and that could be the most important message we communicate.

There is no reason to diminish how miserable these circumstances can be' believe me, I know. Thirty-three years on a Wisconsin golf course have afforded me every opportunity to see it all, including 17 temporary greens on opening day in the mid-1970s. It isn't fun. But it is also amazing to see, from the distance of time, how quickly turf can heal. It doesn't seem that way day by day, but always by Memorial Day the warm days have worked their wonder. I feel confident that will be the case this year as well.



Dealing with ice in the late winter of this year generally involved clearing snow (many techniques were used to do that)...



...and application of a dark material (topdressing in this case).

Paul Huggett succeeded his father Jim as treasurer of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association and one or the other of them has been treasurer of the WTA for nearly all of its history. The exact years of their terms is a fact I am going to investigate sometime.

I am curious because I am grateful. I haven't crossed paths with any better businessmen in my career, and they both, in their times, brought those skills to the WTA board room.

At our last WTA board meeting Paul presented the following graphic that illustrates how the WTA has supported turfgrass research in Wisconsin.

It is an impressive number, made even more so when you realize that; 1). Since 2/28/05 the Newman Fund is nearly completed with a \$95,000 gift from the WTA and another amount pending that will complete it; 2). The Kurth/WLF Distinguished Graduate Fellowship isn't included and is also completed; and 3). The match to the three completed fellowships (\$750,000) isn't included.

Further, we believe that the fourth and final fellowship will be completed in 2005, adding another \$500,000.

Paul's initiative to summate the totals and present them so clearly demonstrates that our industry does work hard to "help itself."

Not the news I wanted to read: a weak El Nino system in the Pacific Ocean, coupled with greenhouse gases generated by human activity, could make 2005 the

**What has the WTA done with your contributions?
As of Feb 28, 2005**

Educational-Fund Raising Activity Income (Since 1996)	
Summer Field Day	\$ 65,135.33
Golf Outting	\$ 56,558.65
Winter Conference	\$ 141,432.48
	\$ 263,126.46
Other funding come from dues and generous contributions	
Grants Awarded (Since 1996)	
Scholarships	\$ 21,000.00
Endowment Accounts	\$ 207,522.34
Research	\$ 292,198.97
	\$ 520,721.31
Graduate Student Fellowships Setup	
Kussow Fellowship	\$ 250,000.00
Newman Fellowship (Still Building to 250k)	\$ 125,000.00
<small>Generous contribution from the Newman Family, Oshkosh CC, and Golf Outtings included in total.</small>	
Endowment Account (Started after OJ Noerr Building Completed)	
WI Turf Research and Education.	\$ 221,000.00
<small>Direct contributions to this list are available.</small>	
TOTAL Contribution for Turfgrass Research and Education*	
	\$ 1,116,721.31

*This Total does not include the OJ Noerr Research Facility in Verona. It also does not include research funding from 1980 to 1996. It does include total endowment account values since inception. The total does not include gifts in kind such as land work and materials contributions. Ask Paul for questions and comments 908 655-3600

warmest year since weather records started being kept in the late 1800s. This is the opinion of NASA scientists.

"There has been a strong warming trend over the past 30 years, due primarily to increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere," said James Hansen of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York.

The warmest year on record was 1998; 2002 and 2003 were second and third, respectively. Last year was the fourth warmest ever.

Can you think of adequate words of appreciation for our dedicated and volunteer staff of writers for *THE GRASS ROOTS* that truly express our gratitude for their precious time and valuable advice and keen observations?

Are there words to rightly thank our advertisers who pay the bills?

The skilled pros at Kramer Printing, led by Beverly Bergemann, have great pride in the role they play in getting *THE GRASS ROOTS* to the newsstand — mountains of gratitude are due them.

Where would we be without Jen Sammerdyake's unbelievable cover art or Steve Scoville's witty cartoons or Lori Bocher's wonderful profiles? This long-serving trio are among my favorite people anywhere.

Everyone's work comes together six times a year, and again for 2004 earned the GCSAA Chapter Publications Award for category 2.

Truly, each issue is an outstanding effort by all involved.

Thank you.

The meeting hosted by LESCO and BASF on March 1st was simply terrific. I was glad to be invited. There rarely have been more turfgrass pathologists assembled at the same place in Wisconsin at the same time. It was a privilege to soak up knowledge from Dr. Joe Vargas, Dr. Bruce Clark, Dr. Randy Kane and Dr. Rick Latin. Dr. Geunhwa Jung, Steve Abler and Lee Miller were also in attendance. The accompanying photo will preserve the day for all time.



Seven turf pathologists gathered in Sheboygan Falls for the LESCO meeting; L-R Dr. Geunhwa Jung, Steve Abler, Dr. Randy Kane, Dr. Joe Vargas, Lee Miller, Dr. Rick Latin and Dr. Bruce Clarke.

I was moved by all the kind words of sympathy extended to me by so many colleagues and friends in golf when my father passed away in early March. Every word meant a lot to me.

I was lucky to enjoy a great relationship with my dad all my life. He loved Wisconsin and her beautiful landscape. His loyalty to his alma mater, the UW-Madison, was deep and true. He was a proud member of the greatest generation, and although proud of his

WWII service overseas he never understood how he survived and his younger brother didn't. Agriculture was his "field" of endeavor, and he loved it. But most important of all to him was his family. He had reverence for his ancestors, and his growing flock of great grandchildren delighted him no end.

I figure if I work hard the rest of my life and keep myself focused, I might end up half the man he was. I am sure going to try. ♣

2005 WGCSA Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Event</u>
April 25, Monday	Grand Geneva Jim Crothers, Supt.	People vs. Pro Tournament
May 16, Monday	Geneva National Jeremy Amosson, Supt.	Club Managers Golf Outing
June 1, Wednesday	Abby Springs G.C. David Smith, Supt.	Super Pro
June 13, Monday	Green Bay C.C. Marc Davison, Supt.	Superintendent/Guest
July 19, Tuesday	Glen Erin G.C. Dave Braasch, GC Supt.	
July 21, Thursday	The Bull G.C. Randy Witt, Supt.	John Deere Tournament
July 26, Tuesday	O. J. Noer Turfgrass Facility Tom Schwab, Manager	WTA Field Day
Aug. 16, Tuesday	Mayville G.C. Lee Mahnke, G.C. Supt.	
Sept. 12, Monday	The Bull at Pinehurst Farms Randy Witt, Supt	WGCSA Tournament
Sept. 26, Monday	Pine Hills C.C. Rod Johnson, Supt.	Wee One Fund Raiser
Sept. 30 - Oct. 1	Cold Water Canyon G.C. Bruce Livingston, Supt.	WGCSA Dinner Dance
Oct. 11, Tuesday	Whistling Straits, Irish Course Grant Davey, G.C. Supt.	WTA Fund Raiser
Nov. 15-16	American Club Kohler, WI	Turf Symposium
2006 Jan. 9-11	Marriott West Madison, WI	Wisconsin Turfgrass and Greenscape Expo