



The Weather's the Story (Again)

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

As if we couldn't have guessed, the first half of 2006 was the warmest on record for the U.S. It is pretty dry and toasty here in Wisconsin as I write this at the midpoint of July. The governor has just instituted some emergency rules because of the dry and hot weather, especially in northwest Wisconsin.

The National Climatic Data Center reported that the average temperature for the contiguous United States from January through June was 51.8 degrees F, or 3.4 degrees F above the average for the 20th century. That made it the warmest such period since record keeping began in 1895.

My friends from New England experienced extreme amounts of rain and the subsequent flooding, but much of the rest of the country, including Wisconsin, continued below normal in precipitation. Through June 45% of the country was in the moderate-to-extreme drought condition, an increase of 6% from May. In our town we're already short three inches of moisture since June 1st. I guess the fortunate factor has been, that although the rainfall totals have been light in our area, they have been well timed.

Electric utilities report record demand. Fortunately for us, our peak demand (for irrigation pumping stations) occurs when utilities have the least call for power in the 24 - hour day. Fears began to mount about water supplies however, regardless whether the supply is surface water or well water. No wonder we are praying for rain and relief from the heat and dry weather.

My sense is that the disease situation has been quite manageable, due no doubt to the moderate

humidity levels. That leads to smiles from us and frowns from suppliers.

Some courses in larger metropolitan areas have altered maintenance practices during ozone alerts and healthy air warnings. Reduced mowing, different mowing times and short workdays have all been used to cooperate with state and local officials.

A summary of the soil moisture status around the state appears here, from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service.

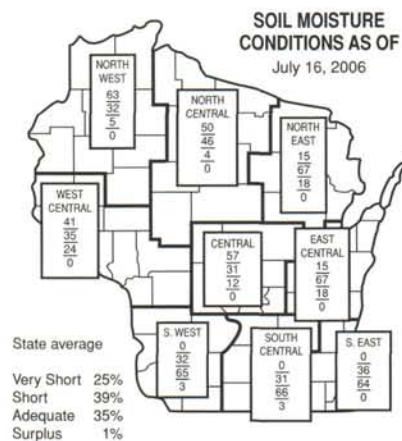
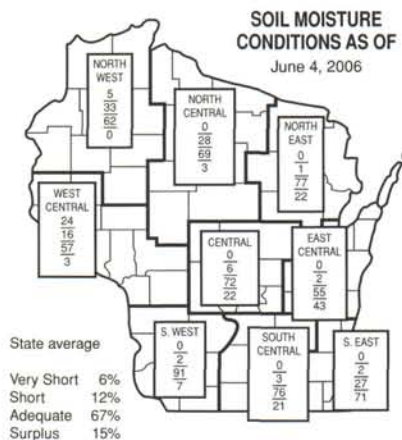
Since a lot of people have asked, here is the current status of the hiring process for a person to fill Dr. Wayne Kussow's position in the Department of Soil Science.

After acceptance of the generous offer of \$100,000 for the first year salary and benefit package from the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association last year, the Department advertised the position, interviews were held and candidates selected. The top candidate was offered the job and after protracted discussions, turned it down. The next candidate has been offered the job, and I cannot see, at this point of the year, much progress being made. Maybe I am wrong about that, but I don't think so. What I do know is this — somebody better shift into high gear real soon and get this position filled. No excuses will be accepted.

Congratulations to Dr. David Cookson. He was finally elected to the Wisconsin Golf Hall of Fame. Few of those accorded this great honor are as deserving as Dr. Cookson.

Cookson has been providing leadership in golf at the club, state and national level for more years that he'd probably like you to know. I personally watched him function as the long-time green committee chairman at Maple Bluff Country Club. He also served as club president.

His activities took him through the offices of the Wisconsin State Golf Association, including president. He wrote for the WSGA publication for years, and for several more years he was a columnist for *The Grass Roots*. The advice he





was giving us 20 years ago has stood the test of time, and I often go back and reread those columns.

Nationally, Dr. Cookson has a long record as a USGA committee person and has an enviable record as a referee in many, many US Open tournaments.

Some time ago an administrative rule was adopted by the Hall of Fame committee that pretty much precluded past WSGA presidents from Hall of Fame selection. Coupled with that, his own humility and his chairmanship of the Hall of Fame committee, Cookson wouldn't allow any conversation about his election to the Hall. As I understand it, some maneuvering by Gene Haas and others allowed this overdue selection to take place.

Those of us who know him and who have benefited from his leadership and commitment to golf are thrilled. Three cheers for you, Doc!

Dan Quast made a trip down to Purdue University on July 17th to see Purdue's remodeled golf course and turfgrass research facility. Both impressed him. He also attended, at the request of JoAnn Otto and family, the presentation of the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation Award of Achievement ceremonies. This year the MRTF presented the award to Wayne Otto, a great recognition of his contributions to turf beyond the borders of Wisconsin. Danny accepted the award for the family.

Really, this is a great honor for all of us who knew Wayne. Danny also used the ceremony to share with the Midwest group information about the Wee One Foundation and the work they are doing on behalf of superintendents in need of help. The boundaries of the Wee One are clearly expanding beyond the borders of Wisconsin.

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Around the corner from Dr. Wayne Kusow's office in King Hall, on the second floor, is a beautiful recognition board that notes the recipients of the Kusow Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship. My question is this: if Wayne retired a year ago, why is he still working 50 or 60 hours a week either in his office or at the Noer Facility? No wonder we love the guy so much!

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Those of us who are wedded to Mother Nature by our profession find our lives governed by the seasons, none more so than the summer season. Although I know of no one who wants to wish his life away, summer on a golf course is an extremely abnormal existence. It is fine for some months, but as we reach the plateau of summer, there is a sense of relief that the days are indeed getting shorter and the daily average high temperature (83 degrees F in our town) is starting to decline. Cooler weather means we can look forward to a weekend off and a little free time at a time when the weather isn't totally miserable. Spirits are lifted by the thought of Field Day, Packer football, Badger training camp, and sounds of crickets and cicadas. Fall is near. Hang on for another month and life will become better. ♣



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