

Operational Reports — Lessons learned from 2005 continued...

Wisconsin Says It All: A Review of 2005

By **Gary Tanko**, Golf Course Superintendent, SENTRYWORLD

Rain and ice in January, record high temps in February, then cold again to extremely warm temps in early April. Those warm days proved to just tease most of us because it fell back into below normal temperatures, when we all needed to get on with seeding but soil temps kept any germination from happening.

Then we get into the early summer with all of us waiting and waiting for some rain. To make matters worse, temperatures and humidity were climbing.

Patience was running out not only from golfers wondering when everything would heal over, but also from ourselves. We were trying to do our best to recover from the winter yet starting to fight the stresses of the hot, dry summer we were experiencing.

Finally after really struggling to just keep turf alive Wisconsin had something to say: let's give these guys one more test – a week of hot humid weather in September to deal with right during a time most of us are hoping for cooler days to aerate and prepare for winter.

We finally came to the end of our season, hoping that what turf has survived the summer and our fall cultural practices will survive this winter.

Well, Wisconsin has decided to give us a break; a mild winter, one that may keep the heating bills down but one that may not harden off the turf. Wisconsin almost mimicked the



exact ice storm and rain of a year ago this past New Year's Day, but it did not happen. However, I was literally out two days before our snowcover using squeegees to push off standing water on greens. Of course Wisconsin gave us almost 3/4 inch of rain before it snowed. There is now some ice that formed under the snow that appears honeycombed. At least it is 34 days latter than last year.

Wisconsin really did have something to say for us in 2005.

It was a real test for most superintendents. We asked ourselves many questions. What should we do, how long can we wait, what is the next course doing, will we even have grass in the spring, or

maybe did we do the right thing?

For us, we decided that we better be proactive and do something. So the work started.

We decided to push the snow off greens that were covered with two to three inches of thick clear ice that formed from one inch of rain and ice that fell on unfrozen turf January 1st, 2005.

We then started to aerate the ice on an extremely cold morning which seemed to work the best for breaking chunks of ice up. We knew the future forecast was for record breaking temps, so we moved quickly.

Wisconsin once again did something not normal for this time of

year. Temperatures reached into the 50's. We literally had running water and big puddles sitting on the greens.

But all of sudden very cold temps were on the way, certain within 12 hours.

I was worried that the turf was going to suffer. Sure, all the ice was mostly gone, but now we had turf exposed to warm temps only to be shocked right back into winter.

April finally arrived and most of us jumped at the opportunity to start seeding all the areas where we lost turf. That worked for awhile until the weather changed and it turned cold again, which really made us start all over once it turned warm again.

One advantage of this was, I feel, the *Poa annua* did die and this was a chance to let the bentgrass fill in. I decided not to aerate and apply TGR and Dimension. Of course, many areas of greens where we lost turf or

was seeded had to be covered for this application. Covers were used and some of our staff had long hours coming back at night to pamper these injured areas back into playable surfaces.

Our summer was very warm with minimal rain, lots of humidity and turf that was beginning to thin, along with take-all patch showing its ugly symptoms. Greens were not reacting to any fertilizers or fungicides. Tests were made for nematodes, but I am still scratching my head on this.


Hand watering and syringing greens seemed to be taking up most of our time. Mowing greens became a real problem for us since we seemed to be scalping all the time and our collars were so delicate you could hardly mow them.

For most of Wisconsin, rain was needed but we received a straight line wind storm that devastated many 100-year old oaks and many other trees on the course.

Wisconsin had something to say; "if you need rain you will get the damaging wind too, followed by hot temps and high humidity."

This storm left behind so much damage we had to close our golf course for one week to clean things up. It was not passable nor could we apply a fungicide, or mow greens, tees, or fairways. As of today we are still cleaning up from this storm.

Finally the fall was here, but again, one week of high humidity and hot temperatures tested the turf one last time.

As we prepared the golf course for winter I was determined to do all the cultural practices best for the turf, but also we let the greens, tees, and fairways grow out and we rolled more than ever. The height of the greens was obnoxious, but I feel they might be healthier going into a winter of unknown. After all, "Wisconsin Says It All!" 



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