

It's All About The Weather

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

It is almost uncanny — there almost always is lousy weather during the state high school basketball tournament-time in Madison. There was a considerable dose of winter on Thursday and Friday of that week in our town again this year. We always wonder if it will be winter's last hurrah.

And it should be winter's last hurrah. March is, after, the first month of spring. The birds are coming back, the sun has returned, leaves and grasses unfurl and turn green. It's no wonder spring is called "spring!"

There are all kinds of holidays in March and April - St. Patrick's, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Passover, Arbor Day and Patriot's Day (April 19, 1775 — the day Americans and British clashed on the Lexington green).

But an important day, if not a holiday, happens for us in golf in Wisconsin these two months — Opening Day!

Before we start wondering and worrying about the 2006 weather, the Wisconsin Field Office of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service summary of temperatures and precipitation is tabulated here for last year's growing season. The data confirms what we know — it was warmer and drier, by far, than normal. It was a tough year. First we dealt with winter injury and then the heat and drought arrived. The only upside was for those among us who had course construction going on, especially in the fall. For them, it was perfect weather.

That weather has continued this winter for areas of the southwest; from Alabama to California, it is bone dry with some places in exceptional drought conditions. The worst areas are in Arizona and New Mexico. Phoenix has

literally gone months without a drop of rainfall.

Some fear the drought is moving north this spring to areas immediately south and west of Wisconsin. The National Drought Monitor, which tracks national conditions, lists abnormal to severe drought for all of Kansas, most of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Illinois, much of South Dakota and eastern Colorado.

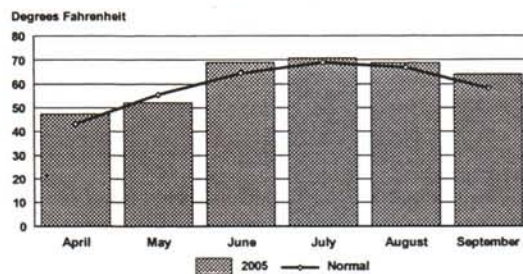
La Nina, a weather pattern that sends more storms to the Northwest but fewer across the southern US, has heightened the dryness and heat.

In fact, the record warmth in January helped boost the winter of 2005-2006 to the fifth warmest on record, 1.2 degrees above the average of 36.290 degrees. The warmest winter on record was 1999 - 2000 (36.96 degrees). It was followed by 1998-00, 1991-92 and 1997 - 98.

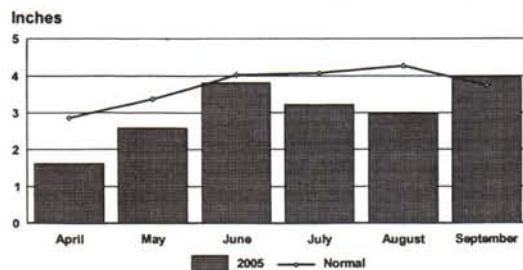
During this winter, 41 states had temperatures



AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURE WISCONSIN, 2005



AVERAGE MONTHLY RAINFALL, WISCONSIN, 2005



SOIL MOISTURE RATINGS, WISCONSIN, 2005



MONTHLY TEMPERATURES: 2005 GROWING SEASON AND NORMAL*

District	April 1/		May 1/		June 1/		July 1/		August 1/		September 1/	
	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal
	Degrees Fahrenheit											
NW	45.9	41.7	50.7	54.4	66.2	63.1	69.3	68.1	67.2	65.9	62.0	56.6
NC	45.4	40.4	50.2	53.2	67.2	61.8	68.7	66.4	65.8	64.2	61.0	55.3
NE	45.2	41.3	50.8	53.6	67.6	62.5	68.6	67.0	67.6	64.8	62.4	56.0
WC	49.5	45.2	53.7	57.4	70.9	66.4	72.5	70.8	69.6	68.3	64.6	59.3
C	48.8	44.5	53.3	56.7	70.6	65.8	71.5	70.2	69.5	67.7	64.8	59.0
EC	46.4	42.8	52.2	54.6	69.1	64.1	71.2	69.5	70.1	67.9	65.5	59.8
SW	50.6	46.1	54.6	57.9	71.5	67.2	72.4	71.4	70.8	69.0	66.4	60.5
SC	50.2	45.8	54.7	57.8	71.9	67.2	72.3	71.3	71.2	68.9	67.6	60.6
SE	48.3	45.0	53.1	56.3	70.7	66.0	71.5	71.2	72.6	69.4	68.4	61.4
STATE	47.5	43.2	52.2	55.5	69.0	64.5	70.6	69.1	68.7	66.9	64.0	58.1

1/Preliminary estimates, 2005. * Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist.

MONTHLY RAINFALL: 2005 GROWING SEASON AND NORMAL*

District	April 1/		May 1/		June 1/		July 1/		August 1/		September 1/	
	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal	2005	Normal
	Inches											
NW	1.54	2.39	2.52	3.29	5.37	4.19	1.89	4.29	2.49	4.44	4.33	3.89
NC	1.65	2.40	2.33	3.31	4.53	4.01	2.86	4.06	2.35	4.36	3.78	4.03
NE	1.68	2.65	2.52	3.29	3.38	3.69	2.09	3.70	3.27	3.81	3.39	3.74
WC	2.15	3.05	2.73	3.69	3.79	4.24	4.08	4.45	3.88	4.54	5.53	3.82
C	1.47	3.02	2.47	3.52	2.94	3.88	4.63	4.13	3.06	4.22	4.10	3.72
EC	1.28	2.81	2.25	2.95	2.13	3.51	2.76	3.38	3.46	3.86	3.61	3.42
SW	1.50	3.55	2.94	3.60	4.57	4.35	4.70	4.33	3.59	4.46	2.96	3.42
SC	1.45	3.47	3.18	3.40	2.55	4.19	4.16	4.07	2.54	4.24	3.22	3.51
SE	1.61	3.48	2.74	3.13	1.94	3.76	2.92	3.82	2.67	4.22	3.96	3.48
STATE	1.62	2.86	2.59	3.37	3.81	4.02	3.22	4.07	2.98	4.27	3.95	3.74

1/Preliminary estimates, 2005. * Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist.

COMPARATIVE TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION DATA

District	Average Temperature						Total Precipitation					
	June - September						April - September					
	Normal*	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 1/	Normal*	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 1/
	Degrees Fahrenheit						Inches					
NW	63.4	64.3	65.4	64.1	61.7	66.2	22.5	26.1	28.1	20.2	22.0	18.1
NC	61.9	63.0	64.5	62.9	61.2	65.7	22.2	24.1	28.3	19.6	20.0	17.5
NE	62.6	63.5	65.0	63.2	61.7	66.6	20.9	22.1	25.4	21.3	18.1	16.3
WC	66.2	66.9	68.7	67.1	65.0	69.4	23.8	27.6	27.4	18.4	27.9	22.2
C	65.7	66.3	68.0	66.1	64.4	69.1	22.5	27.0	25.2	19.7	24.6	18.7
EC	65.3	66.1	67.9	65.1	64.0	69.0	19.9	22.7	19.9	19.7	21.9	15.5
SW	67.0	66.7	69.0	67.3	65.5	70.3	23.7	30.4	24.5	19.1	27.7	20.3
SC	67.0	67.5	69.5	67.6	66.0	70.8	22.9	29.0	20.6	19.0	25.2	17.1
SE	67.0	67.4	69.5	66.7	65.5	70.8	21.9	25.8	22.3	16.3	24.0	15.8
STATE	64.7	65.3	67.0	65.2	63.4	68.1	22.3	26.0	25.5	19.5	23.1	18.2

1/Preliminary estimates, 2005. * Normal is defined as the 30-year average for the years 1971-2000. Source: State Climatologist.

above average, seven were near average and none were cooler than the long term mean. Hawaii and Alaska aren't included in these numbers,

It isn't difficult to see a trend here.

Among the veteran superintendents my age are few who could forget March 4, 1976 - the bicentennial year. The worst ice storm ever hit Wisconsin 30 years ago. Heavy rain followed by very cold temperatures followed by strong and wild winds devastated the state. Hundreds of thousands went days and weeks without power, phone service and water.

Trees were down everywhere, and golf courses experienced particular damage. I remember cleaning up wood for a month. Nearly every square foot had to be raked by hand. Apparently there was a bad ice storm in 1936, but the old timers said it was not as devastating as the ice storm of 1976.

Whatever happens now will have only a short-term effect on when we open for the 2006 golf season. The winter educational season was really good, I thought. The GCSAA conference and the WTA EXPO lived up to expectations, and the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference was top notch. So we should be ready in that regard. We have had enough time, generally speaking, to get equipment ready for another year.

Can't you feel the enthusiasm and excitement building? I sure can, despite having experienced golf course springs 37 times. I always say it because I mean it: "I expect this year to be our best year ever." We will know if it turns out that way by October, a short six months away.

Good Luck! ♣

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