

# Around the Corner to Spring

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

Sun Prairie's Jimmy the Groundhog had it about right in early February when he saw his shadow and predicted six more weeks of winter. There were two periods of heavy-duty winter – lots and lots of snow and cold weather – and one caused problems for WGCSA members returning from the GCSAA conference. There was another stormy winter period in early March. But warm days – 60 degrees F. in some areas of Wisconsin – melted the snow and most of the melt water went into the soil.

The moisture was welcome, but the conversation north/south/east/west in Wisconsin after the melt was snow mold. It seems every course had at least a little of it, from the superficial to the serious. But as things dried out at the end of the month, minds were eased as the turf outgrew most of the damage. It won't be a year of winterkill, thankfully, unless crown hydration crops up soon. It could be a nice start to the year.



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But despite our double shot of winter in February and March, this winter was the warmest on record worldwide.

NOAA reported the combined land and ocean temperatures for December through February were 1.5 degrees F. above average for the period since record keeping started in 1880.

For the U.S., the winter temperature was near average. Like Wisconsin, the U.S. winter got off to a late start and was spring-like until sometime in January. February brought a return to reality and was the third coldest on record. Last January was the hottest January on record in the U.S.

Dr. Rick Klemme, associate dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the UW - Madison, received a big promotion in late December. He will be the Cooperative Extension dean and director for three years, a term that started on February 1.

Rick has been a familiar face in the turf industry. A lot of Extension work goes on in our business – how else are we to learn from the research we support? – and Dr. Klemme has always recognized the significance of the grass industry in Wisconsin. He's in a powerful and influential position and is to be congratulated for such an achievement.

The front page of the Wall Street Journal on one of the days during the week of March 5th featured an article about souped up golf carts. From the dateline in Clamis, California came the story about golf cart drag races on speedways, races in the desert sand, and golf cars modified nearly beyond recognition.

The sport has become so popular that it features a bimonthly magazine (96 pages), shows (Buggy Bonanza) and kits for retrofitting a golf car (Buggies Unlimited). What's next - souped up triplex greens mowers?

I attended the New England Turfgrass Conference during the first week of March. It is one of the best, if not the best, of the regional turfgrass conferences I have attended. The program includes GCSAA seminars on Monday, an awesome equipment show for three days, and an educational program that blends faculty from six northeast states.

My experience over the years has been the northeast has problems similar to ours except that they seem to get them several years before we do.

Regulations, drought and subsequent water issues, diseases, insects, and more all happen there before the Midwest. They also have the lead in solving these problems and we can learn from that. Therefore, it has been a valuable event for me to attend from time to time over the years.

Over the course of a long career I have gotten to know quite a few colleagues from that part of the country and the networking is tremendous. I also was able to stop at Fiddlers Green near Amherst, Massachusetts and visit with Dr. Geoffrey Cornish, golf course architect and author. Standing in the presence of this great man is an experience I cannot describe, other than to say each visit is unforgettable. Also, I had the opportunity to visit with Dr. Joseph Troll, Mel Lucas, Anthony Grosso, Paul Sabino, Peter Salinetti, Ralph Nicotera, Scott MacKintosh, Mark Mungeam and Tim Gerrish, all friends who were attending the show as well.

I also spent a lot of time visiting with a friend of all of ours – Dr. Geunhwa Jung. He is settled in at the University of Massachusetts and lives a short distance from campus. No one doubted he would fit in quickly, and he has. He is off and running with his research program, and we will all be hearing lots from him in the years to come. New



UMass professor Dr. Geunhwa Jung at the NE Turfgrass Conference.

England's gain was Wisconsin's loss.

It was colder there in Providence than it was back in the Midwest, but the four days were spent inside the Providence Convention Center, and they were very productive. Give it a try sometime; you'll appreciate it, too.

So, here we are on the threshold of another season. I am a bit melancholy because I don't have many more left before retirement; this reality may heighten the extreme experience of spring on a Wisconsin golf course.

Best of luck to all for 2007. ♻

The advertisement features a wooden cabinet on the left with a glass door. To its right is a red cooler with a white interior. Below the cooler is a red water dispenser with a white top. On the right side of the ad is the National Golf Graphics logo, which consists of a shield with 'N' and 'G' inside, flanked by laurel branches, with the text 'NATIONAL GOLF GRAPHICS' above and below. Below the logo is the text 'Serving the Golf Industry Since 1989'. At the bottom right of the ad is a small inset image of a red cooler filled with ice.

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