



At Long Last...Autumn!

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

Even by official determination, like the calendar, fall seemed late this year - essentially September 23rd. By all reckoning, that is a late date for the equinox to arrive.

The weather finally has a hint of the best season in the air. After brief rain on September 21st, the air was warm and clear and crisp the next day, which just happened to be the opening game of the Big 10 football season in Madison.

Honestly, I have never attended a football game anywhere on a more perfect fall day than that one in Camp Randall. Mark and Karen Kienert must have felt the same way - they were projected on all the big screens in the stadium before kickoff to welcome all of the other Badgers to the stadium. I think you call that "15 seconds of fame!" It was a typical Big 10 slugfest, won (barely) by our beloved Badgers. The season still hasn't taken off like expected and may end up a down year. But who cares? We still have a lot of fun at the games.

It wasn't exactly a great summer, at least from my vantage point in south central Wisconsin. A long dry spell of nearly two months in our area was broken in August when it started to rain and wouldn't stop. We, of course, blame Mike Lyons. He called for rain in the last issue of *The Grass Roots*, but forgot to detail either a date to end or a total amount. As it turned out, our course received 16 inches of rain in August, half of or "normal" precipitation for the entire year. We were lucky around here; extensive damage was done in other areas of southern Wisconsin. And all the while the drought in northern Wisconsin persisted.

We set a couple of strange records, in the context of a warm summer, here in town. The coolest daily high temperature for August 18th was set at 63 degrees F. After a bunch of hot days the record for the lowest temperature for September 15th was set with 32 degrees F. There



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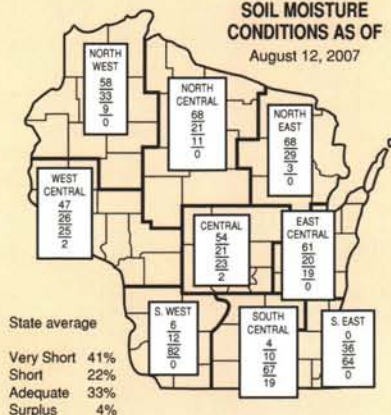
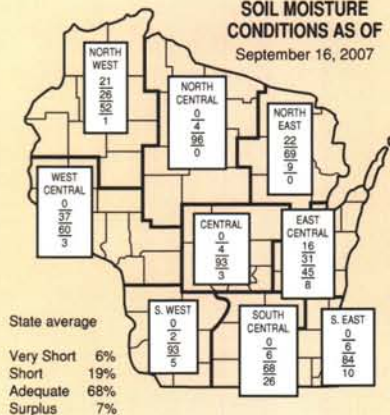
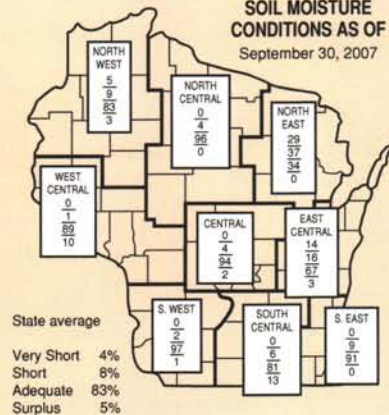
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were some areas of our course white with frost, which hasn't been repeated yet as I write this on October 18th.

With all the rain came all the mosquitoes, and these miserable insects made work and play for many of us miserable.

While some bemoan the thought of cold weather and snow, not me. I am like my good friend Howard Kulke, who says "I get a little grumpy when the temperature gets above 70 degrees F." The pending days of stunning landscape color, fresh apple cider, pumpkins and gourds and Indian corn, sparkling dew on the grass and football games make many of us, weary of a long summer, happy.

Statistics from the Wisconsin Ag Stat Service (shown above) visualize the last couple of months of soil moisture status very nicely.

Interviews for the turf pathologist position at our land grant university went well, and you were well represented in the selection process. That is as it should have been since the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association is funding the first year salary and benefit package. Mark Kienert, Tom Harrison, Aaron Hogdon, Paul Huggett, Terry Kurth and yours truly had a couple of hours with each of the four candidates at the Noer Facility. The faculty members of the turf team - John Stier, Chris Williamson, Doug Soldat and Tom Schwab were involved, as was the TDL lab director Paul Koch. The new hire, in fact, will be Paul's boss. Professors Walt Stevenson, Caitlyn Allen and Murray Clayton were very open and inclusive and considerate of us and are to be thanked for that. The first reading of the resumes indicated a strong field to choose from, and four were invited to Madison for a two-day interview.

In case you hadn't heard, Jim Kerns, James Buck, Young-Ki Jo and Henry Wetzels were the four candidates. The goal, of course, was to get the best person for the job on the job by January 1st. That date will allow a few months of orientation before the 2008 season gets underway.

As soon as we know who the choice is, it will be posted on the NOERNET.

There is no more sure sign that the season is moving along than to receive notice and registration materials for the famous Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium in the mail. Soon enough we will gather at the American Club, talk about the season past, and listen to top notch speakers who will help us with everyone's goal of an ever better year next year. See you there. 🌱



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