



A Year of Change!

By **David Brandenburg**, Golf Course Manager, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

With the new administration taking office in Washington, the word change has been popular in the press. Of course with the challenges the current economy has brought us in our private and work lives most of us could use some change.

I have used the phrase "A Year of Change!" with my family numerous times this year to try to help explain why I or we are making minor changes or doing new things.

For instance, why did I grow a beard for the first time in my life? It's a year of change! Why did I decide to join the Bradford Beach Polar Bear Club and jump in Lake Michigan on New Years Day? It's a year of change! Maybe it is just a minor mid-life crisis or perhaps a screw loose. Either way... it's a year of change!

Actually, we can change ourselves any time we want, but often life reflection and resolutions to make changes are made to start on New Years Day with resolutions to do everything from losing weight to stop smoking. It gives everyone a chance to evaluate where they have been and how a fresh start with new ideas can challenge us to be better people.

Looking back at 2008, in many ways I am glad to see it go. Spring was horrible for the golf industry, the flooding in June only made things worse and ours along with many clubs struggled to attract players and make a profit. Personally, I lost my Dad to an accident and realized life will never be the same for our family.

Layoffs were the number one topic in the news and business is down everywhere. I guess I can hope for a bailout from the "fed" but I doubt my driveway improvements and back patio would make the Obama administrations list of infrastructure improvements.

On the other hand the optimist in me looks back on 2008 and give thanks for the gifts of family, friends health, employment and all the positive things I have been provided. I will use the challenges of 2008 to make a better 2009.

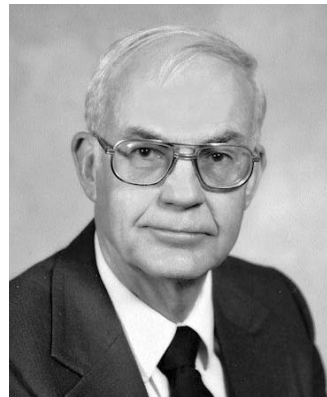
2009 is a clean slate to start with unlimited opportunities and a personal resolution to be more positive in attitude and be a better leader for those that need me to be.

Dr. Gayle Worf has been inducted into Wisconsin Green Industry Federation Hall of Fame. Dr. Worf, professor emeritus of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is regarded by his

peers as an outstanding leader and pioneering plant pathologist. Dr. Worf was a disease expert and resource for all of Wisconsin agriculture including floriculture, ornamental, tree, and turf industries.

Among the litany of awards bestowed upon Dr. Worf is the "Friend of the County Agents Award" the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Wisconsin Extension and The Distinguished Service Award from the WGCSA. Dr. Worf was inducted into the WGIF Hall of Fame on January 15 at the WGIF Awards ceremony during the Mid Am Conference.

Gayle was given the WGCSA Distinguished Service Award in July of 1987 at a regular meeting at Lake Wisconsin Country Club. By circumstance the scheduled speaker for that night cancelled and Gayle was called upon to fill in, a job he did with his usual excellence.



Dr. Worf was born in Kansas and received his B.S. degree and a M.S. degree in Agronomy and Plant Pathology from Kansas State University. After serving as a County Agent in Ness County, Arkansas Gayle attended graduate school at UW-Madison. He completed his PhD in Plant Pathology and Botany in 1961 and spent two years at Iowa

State University in Ames before returning to Madison. Dr. Worf became a full professor in 1969 and served until he retired from his active role in 1991.

The Northern Great Lakes Golf Course Superintendents Association Annual Symposium will be held March 4 with the association business meeting held March 3. The symposium will focus on research the group is funding and speakers include, Dr. Nick Christians, Iowa State University, Dr. Kevin Frank, Michigan State University, Dr. Doug Soldat and Mr. Paul Koch, University of Wisconsin.

I have attended four of the NGLGCSA Symposiums and can tell you I have never been disappointed in the education provided. More information can about the event and the association at NGLTURF.ORG.

Have you signed up for your USGA Green Section Agronomist visit yet? First started in 1953, this service permits individual facilities to reap the benefits of on-site visits by highly skilled USGA agronomists located in Green Section offices throughout the country. Each agronomist visits more than 130 courses annually and that experience helps golf course staff and officials produce the best possible golf turf for the dollars that can be spent. The TAS's purpose is not to tell anyone how to run a golf course or what products to buy. Rather, it seeks to bring a wealth of information and an impartial yet concerned perspective regarding turfgrass growth requirements, how these requirements might best be managed for golf, and ideas that other golf courses have found to be beneficial.

The 2009 fees are \$1,800 for a half-day visit if paid before May 15 or \$2,300 for payments after that date. The full day visit is \$2,600 if paid before May 15 or \$3,100 if paid after that date.

In these tight financial times those amounts may be first looked at as a burden on your budget. However when you consider the challenges we have, there is no better time to invest in the guidance and experience of a USGA Agronomist.

Another Reinders Turf and Irrigation Conference is around the corner. The 19th session will be held March 11-12 at the Waukesha County Expo Center. The conference will highlight an environmental theme titled "Think Green, Be Green, Save Green."

A multi-faceted event, the conference offers more than 40 seminars with great education for superintendents, golf and park staff, mechanics, and irrigation specialists. Speakers this year include Dr. Bruce Clark, Rutgers University, Dr. Roch Gaussoin,

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dr. Bruce Branham, University of Illinois and the ever popular Elvis impersonating Dr. Joe Vargas of Michigan State University.

The event has been awarded 80 education points by the GCSAA. Visit www.reinders.com for more information.

In this year of change, you may be looking for new avenues to expand your education and knowledge of the golf industry as a whole. GCSAA has announced a free business resource is available for GCSAA members. If you want to advance your professional knowledge in the new year, sign up for a free subscription to the digital version of Golf Inc. The magazine features profiles of industry leaders, trends in development and operations, and news from the golf industry, this publication can help you better understand key issues affecting owners and operators.

To learn what this audience is saying about the superintendent's role during these economically challenging times, check out the following blog post, "Controlling

maintenance costs: Why it's crucial to get your superintendent on board." See the blog or sign up for the free digital version at GolfIncMagazine.com.

Another great online source of information for everyone in the golf industry is Golf Business Magazine. This publication of the National Golf Course Owners Association can be found at Golfbusiness.com. These two publications although driven more towards ownership and development also feature valuable information on turf and course construction.

Coupled with Golf Course Management, Golf Course Industry, Golfdom and of course *The Grass Roots*, turf mangers are able to find valuable free information to help them be leaders at their individual clubs.

Congratulations go to Pat Zurowski, Superintendent at The Golf Club at Camelot. Pat was named at the 2008 recipient of the Golf Course Owners of Wisconsin's Leadership Award.

The committee made this decision based on Pat's wealth of expe-



The show floor is bustling with excitement at the 18th Reinders Conference in 2007.

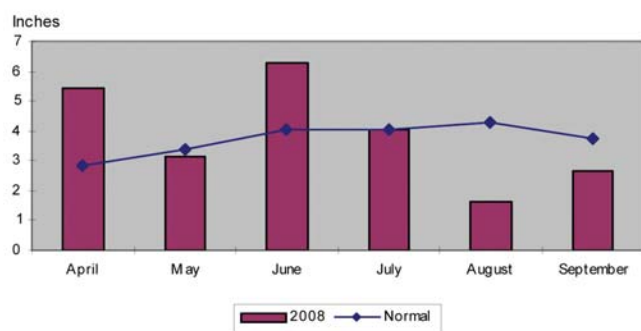
rience, his leadership, and commitment to detail and the outstanding condition of his course. The selection committee was comprised of owners of golf courses, media members and representatives from the WSGA and PGA.

Pat is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin Madison Turf Management Program and was previously the superintendent at Reedsburg Country Club. Pat and his family were honored by the Golf Course Owners of Wisconsin at their fall awards banquet.

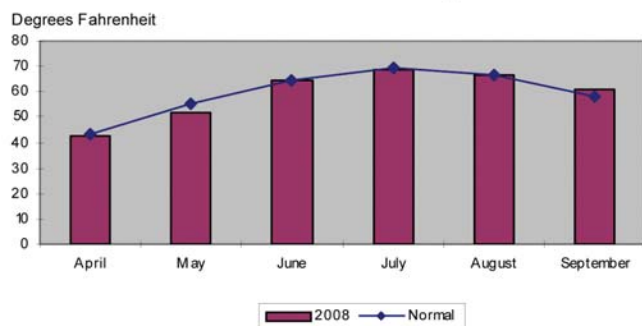
Way to go Pat!

I for one will not miss the weather of 2008. A cold snowy winter was followed by a cold spring causing delays in spring green up and recovery from winter damage. Summer brought seasonal temperatures but June brought record rainfall that closed some courses for weeks and left damage that lasted through the season. November and December brought early and record snow and cold. A quick warm up melted some of the snow piles, while rain caused some concern when temperatures quickly fell. Turf managers will soon be out scouting for ice and making decisions about removal. These graphs below, showing Statewide Monthly Rainfall and Temperatures, are courtesy of the Wisconsin Field Office of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Monthly Rainfall
2008 Wisconsin State Average



Monthly Temperature
2008 Wisconsin State Average



Congratulations to Glen Obear for winning the WGCSA James R Love Scholarship. Brian Zimmerman presented Glen with the award at the WTA Expo on January 13. Glen is from Sheboygan where he attended Sheboygan South High School.

In High School Glen enjoyed Jazz Band, Golf and Tennis but it was a hobby that helped his career in turf. Glen enjoyed surfing in the waves of Lake Michigan and it was on the surfboard he met Grant Davey of Whistling Straits Golf Course. This led to Glen getting a position at Whistling Straits Irish Course in 2006 and 2007, and he had the great opportunity to work on the staff during the 2007 US Senior Open.

A student majoring in Soil Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Glen spent 2008 at Kukio Beach Golf Club as a intern and is scheduled to return to Whistling Straits for the 2009 golf season. The J.R. Love Scholarship is given annually to a University of Wisconsin student. The scholarship is named after Dr. Love, University of Wisconsin Turf Professor from 1954 to 1986.

Golf rounds fell again in the Midwest during 2008 according to Golf Datatech. Numbers through November show rounds down 1.7% for the year and 3.6% for November in the East North Central Region. Wisconsin was up 1.6% for November but that did not erase the reduction of 4.2% for the year overall. Neighboring states followed the local trend with Illinois down 1.8%, Minnesota 1.7% and Michigan down 1.7% through November. Considering few rounds were played in the region in December those numbers will only increase when the year-end numbers are in place. Worst in the region was Indiana down 13% for November and 4.7% for the year.

Golf Datatech uses rounds numbers submitted by PGA, NGF and GCSAA member clubs.

It looks like 2008 will also mark the third year in a row golf course closing outnumbered openings. With some markets overbuilt, course closings are welcome relief to owners and memberships hoping to be able to pay their bills with revenue from increase play.

I am sure all of us know of a family member or friend who has lost their job or been laid off recently. It is happening all over as companies strive to stay profitable or as they face the reality they must close. Often the golf industry is not effected by short-term economic patterns but as the recession continues it is obvious that is not true this time around.

Golf course owners and memberships are struggling to stay afloat much less be profitable. In mid December I attended an educational meeting at Old Hickory Golf Club sponsored by DHD Tree Products. Unfortunately,

snow kept attendance down but just in the group of superintendents present, we learned of two superintendents who were downsized and three others that were laid off for a extended period for the first time in their careers.


Layoff sounds bad until you are let go for good. My first thoughts were the layoffs were shortsighted, as we all know how much work we do in the offseason preparing for the next season. In the long run, the expense of winter maintenance pays off in better equipment performance and course conditions the following year.

On my way home I continued to wonder what could these owners or membership groups be thinking. However, I quickly came to the realization that these are decisions for managers to make without a winning resolution. Like the

proverbial "between a rock or a hard place". Do they keep staff on and risk going bankrupt or lay them off for a time to allow them to work another year while you hope revenue increases?

Given those choices there is only one good solution for the future. Do the short term layoffs and hope your business plan allows the business to improve for next year. We also learned that day 53-year WGCSA member business Wisconsin Turf Equipment Corporation had ceased as a dealer of Jacobsen equipment. As you will read on the back page some of the employees will move on to other opportunities in the turf industry and owner Lyle Christopherson will continue with deep tine aerification, overseeding and equipment rental. We wish all the employees luck as they search for new oppor-

tunities. We also welcome the Burris Equipment Company as the Jacobsen dealer for southern Wisconsin.

2009 will indeed be a year of change. There will be challenges and some of us will struggle personally and professionally. Regardless of what happens or the challenges we are given, each of us will be given gifts of family, friends and the ability to take the time to count our blessings as we prepare for a new season! 



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