



# The Long Spring

By David Brandenburg, Golf Course Manager Rolling Meadows Golf Course

What a wild ride so far! Spring came early and fast followed by dry, then wet, then cold but the one constant was the wind. Even though we are ahead in Growing Degree Days it seems as though some plants are way ahead and some are way behind. I know for us in Fond du Lac killing Dandelions and clover with our normal methods has not worked that well in part due to the cold nights.

Many courses were able to open early and receive some much needed bonus income from happy golfers. We had carts the first day we opened which has never happened before in red clay country.

For many golf courses the turf went from dormant to dry in a hurry in mid to late March. Conversations on Noernet centered around turning on irrigation systems with frost in the ground and who is watering what. The soil moisture maps do not start until April so I have included April 11 and May 16. Nothing surprising in the maps as the north and west seemed to miss some of the spring rains and snows.

Congratulations to Dr. John Stier, Professor and Department Chair of the Department of Horticulture, University of Wisconsin - Madison who was selected to receive the 2010 Robert G.F. and Hazel T. Spitze Land Grant Faculty Award for Excellence.

The award was given in recognition of Dr. Stier's breadth of teaching achievements, relevance of research and impact of research and service.

The award was presented to John at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences on April 28th. Congratulations Dr. Stier!

Check out your Wisconsin Golfer Magazine this month and see the article about Trygve Ekern, Golf Course Superintendent at Yahara Hills Golf Club in Madison. The article is not about Trygve's skills as a superintendent caring for the 36 hole course but as a player. Trygve has won the club championship at Yahara the past 7 years and is Madison's Mid-Amateur Champion two years running.

As with many of us in the turf business Ekern finds it challenging

to play enough golf to stay competitive while sharing time between work and home with his wife Bridget and son Anders. From the results he must be playing once in awhile!

Congratulations Trygve and good luck this season!

Wisconsin courses fared well in Golfweeks 2010 Best Courses lists. Whistling Straits in Sheboygan has stayed at number 3 on the modern courses list (1960 to present) while the River Course at Blackwolf Run in Kohler was number 39.

On the classic list Milwaukee Country Club in River Hills was ranked 44 while the Links Course at the Golf Courses of Lawsonia was 57.

Golfweek also listed the top public courses in Wisconsin. The list included the above courses along with the Irish Course at Whistling Straits, Erin Hills (Hartford), The Bull at Pinehurst Farms (Sheboygan Falls), University Ridge (Verona), the Meadow Valleys Course at Blackwolf Run, Troy Burne Golf Club (Hudson) and the Player Course at Geneva National Golf Club (Lake Geneva).

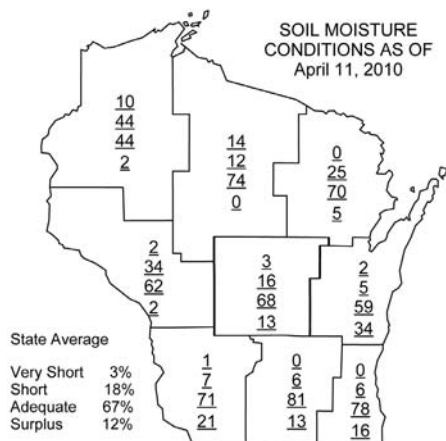
The badger state is becoming a golf destination for golfers of all levels and that is something we can be proud of.

*Editors Note: The following was contributed by Tom Emmerich.*

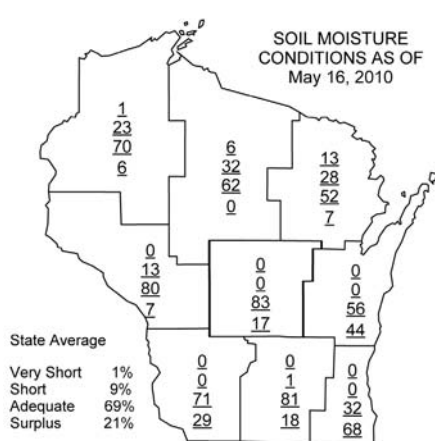
The golf irrigation industry lost a true pioneer and friend with the passing of Ken Holthaus.

Ken, who was employed with Midwest Irrigation in East Dubuque, Illinois for the past 45 years passed away on February 1st.

Ken was an important component of a growing golf irrigation



Source: USDA, NASS, Wisconsin Field Office



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Ken Holthaus

industry and in developing the installation techniques that are in use today. Ken's career spanned the range of irrigation technology that began with the installation of center sod cup quick coupler systems through multiple row weather station/computer controlled systems we have today.

Through this career, Ken was involved in numerous golf irrigation projects and enjoyed the relationships that developed with the golf course superintendents and the other industry professional that he worked with.

I was first introduced to Ken in 1985 when I was employed at Reinders selling golf irrigation equipment. That meeting developed into a professional relationship that spanned 25 years and 35 golf projects.

For a young man trying to establish a consulting business, Ken was my ready reference. When I would encounter a design challenge, I could always count on Ken's vast experience to offer a solution. As golf course superintendent mentors an assistant, so Ken served as my mentor and became an even better friend.

Ken is survived by his wife Elaine, daughter Nancy, son Brad and four granddaughters. Our condolences go out to Ken's family, friends and the staff at Midwest Irrigation.

Ken will be missed.



Wisconsinites have plenty of opportunities to watch some great amateur and professional golf. The State Amateur, Junior and Wisconsin State Open are free to all spectators, while GCSAA members gain entry into the John Deere

Classic, The PGA Championship and the BMW Championship.

- 93rd Western Junior Championship - June 21-25, Blue Mound Golf and Country Club, Wauwatosa
- John Deere Classic - July 8-11, TPC Deere Run, Silvis, IL
- 109th Wisconsin State Amateur Championship - July 19-22, The Bull at Pinehurst Farms, Sheboygan Falls
- 92nd PGA Championship - August 9-15, Whistling Straits, Haven



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- Wisconsin State Open - August 23-25, The Legend at Bristlecone, Hartland
- BMW Championship (Former Western Open) - September 9-12, Cog Hill Golf and Country Club, Lemont, IL

For those of you who did not have a chance to watch the exit polls on CNN the night of the Wisconsin spring election I did manage to win a seat on our local village board. So far it has been an enjoyable eye opening experience as I learn the many different facets of a small village.

You quickly gain a lot of respect for the employees we have and the many jobs the Village Clerk, Director of Public Works and Police Chief have to do as they keep an eye on the village and it's concerns. Even though it is a small community we have the same tasks and responsibilities of a large city, only without the staff.

I have been appointed to the Public Works Committee and have been named Weed Commissioner. I first thought that was due to my agronomic background and considered it an honor. I was quickly brought back to earth when I realized it's the job the give the "newbie" on the board. When the village receives a complaint about a

property not keeping the lawn mowed my job is to do an inspection and decide if the lawn is over 6".

If the lawn is over 6" tall I alert the village clerk to send the resident a letter of notice to mow the lawn in 5 days or have it mowed by village staff at the homeowner's expense. At least I don't have to mow the lawns!

How did your facility fair in 2009? The warm fall gave some Wisconsin operators needed rounds and revenues to get through the winter. Year end numbers for the United States from Golf Datatech showed rounds were down by less than 1% which is considered a victory considering how the recession has affected other industries.

However, revenue was down nearly 6% as more rounds were sold at a discount in order to attract customers. Unfortunately all this happened as our prices continue to increase causing many operators to cut budgets and try to do more with less once again.

More courses closed nationwide than opened for the 3rd year in a row which is a good thing unless you worked at one of the closed courses. Industry estimates are that up to 1,000 more courses may close in the next 5 years. There is

no easy answer to the problems the golf industry is facing. Counting on early springs and rain only at night is not a feasible business plan.

Hopefully with proper planning and implementation we can make it through this challenge with better skills and the respect of our customers.

One of my favorite quotes is "We judge others by their actions, but we judge ourselves by our intentions." It has been attributed to Ian Percy a motivational speaker but also as an American Proverb so I am not sure who originally penned it but I think it says volumes.

It is easy to do this as we mix our intentions with who we really are or how we really behave. However for us to be effective and respected leaders at our facilities we need to take a honest look at our actions as that is how our staff, customers and employers judge us.

Most of us have areas we can improve but we need to take a few moments to look at how we really perform and behave to truly judge ourselves.

Enjoy the early summer and good luck to you and your clubs as we enter the heart of the 2010 golf season. 🌱

## Welcome New Members

**Harrison Beal, Class C, Oconomowoc Golf Club**

**Chris Duoss, Class SM, Lauderdale Lakes Country Club**

**Dwight Zimmermann, Class SM, Kettle Hills Golf Club**