

2011 In Review

By David Brandenburg, Editor

Another year has gone to the historians! How will you judge 2011? Were you and your club successful? Did your turf and staff survive weather extremes and challenges from smaller budgets and more demanding golfers?

Were you able to enjoy the season and take some time to get away? Hopefully so.

My positive spin on the year was it was okay, and could have been a lot worse. There were plenty of days to enjoy the sunrise over the ledge surrounding Fond du Lac, plenty of days to enjoy baseball and golf, and most importantly plenty of days to enjoy life and family.

Lets review what happened.

The Weather

Spring was a disappointment for players, staff and the cash register as late cold and snow ruined much of April without even considering March for play. Those days hung like a anchor over the rest of the year as they could never be made up.

The weather charts show the increased moisture in April and again in July with a dryer August and September. Temperatures were near monthly normals with July and August a bit above normal.

Soil moisture was adequate for most of the state but similar to politics weather is local. The charts are nice to look at but monthly averages do not show the

local battles courses had with heat, humidity and short runs of wet conditions and dry conditions.

At our facility we had 174 golf playable days in comparison to our 4 year average of 192. Most of the 18 lost days were in April. We count golf playable days as above 45 degrees and less than .25" rain as that seems to be the industry average.

As expected our season was shorter with 237 days open in comparison to 245 for a 4 year average.

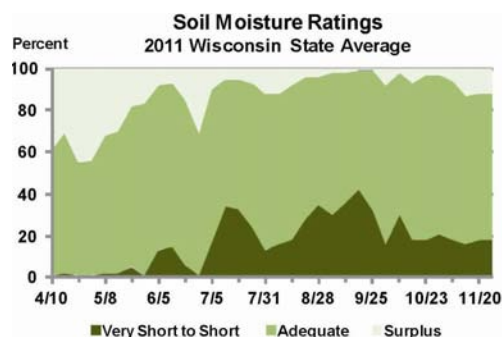
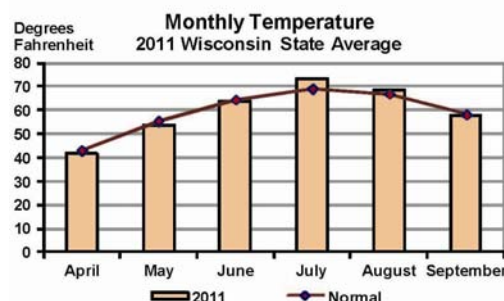
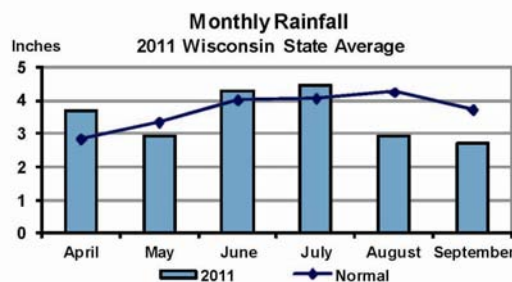
With any luck 2012 will bring a warm spring with great growing conditions and rain only at night.

Money Matters

In comparing rounds and revenue to 2010 August was our best overall month where as to be expected April was our worst.

After 27 years in this business I am still amazed a 70 degree day in September will be slow while a 50 degree day in November will be busy. The urge to play golf works in mysterious ways.

Many courses were able to recover some revenue in December and even this January until the snows finally fell. I say some revenue because the short days really limit tee times but golfers all seem to be in a good mood when they are hitting the links in winter. Happy golfers are worth more than we give them credit for.



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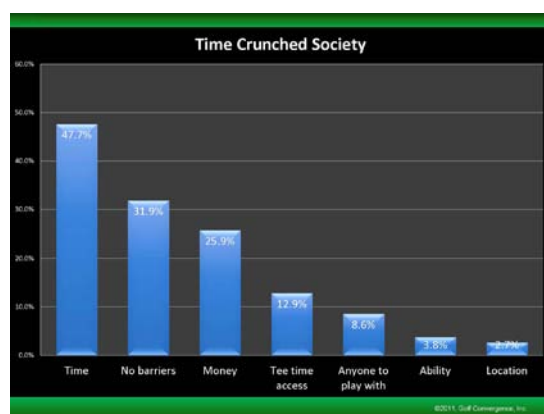
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EDITORS NOTEBOOK

My theory is gas prices are hurting our business more than most publications or experts have expressed. For golf it is two fold because we buy a lot of fuel for equipment and carts but also our customers use fuel to get to our golf courses. With golfers paying 30 to 50% more for gas each week it leaves less discretionary income for golf.

The sluggish economy and number of underemployed have many customers working more hours in their primary or second jobs.

Time continues to be a detriment to the growth of the game. We are all busier with jobs, families, friends, 248 channels on cable along with other hobbies. A 18 hole round of golf is easily 5 plus hours away from home and other activities. Get to a busy daily fee club and it stretches to 6 hours with travel, warm-up, golf, lunch and travel back home.



Time for golf? Time was the biggest barrier to playing more from survey respondents in Grand Rapids, MI. (Graph courtesy of JJ Keegan, Golf Convergence.)

The graph above shows time was the largest factor to why golfers did not play golf more often. These particular results are from Grand Rapids, MI however, JJ Keegan, of Golf Convergence states "As we go around the country, time | no barrier | and money always compete for the top spots. Usually, time is 1st, no barriers 2nd and money third."

Considering our association events usually lead to 5 hour 18 hole rounds I am not sure turf managers will be much help in speeding up a round of golf. I think the best thing we can do is to have the course properly marked for play and have rough heights and green speeds that match our clientele.

Overall faster play will come from industry wide player education programs that will

have to start at the club level.

There are no easy answers to improving the economy or increasing rounds. We have work to do on a individual and national basis.

Imprellis

It was not that long ago I had never heard of the herbicide Imprellis or dreamed of a product so good it provided post and pre-emergent herbicide protection on our toughest weeds at low application rates.

I jumped on the bandwagon with both feet and found the price was great and the product worked as advertised. Now it is a product that we will never forget; not for how well it worked but for its effect on evergreen trees.

Word starting spreading in late June that those who used the product in late 2010 were seeing dieback on trees and by August golf course superintendents, owners and members were in panic mode as more and more trees began to die.

We can debate who or what is responsible for this damage but there is plenty of blame to go around. As professionals we are responsible to test new products on our courses but at the same time we are guaranteed the products we buy are safe and thoroughly tested by the manufactures, the EPA and our sales representatives.

It is a lesson learned the hard way as Dupont has taught the industry a new way to test herbicides.

With home landscapes devastated and some golf courses losing hundreds of mature trees what happens next?

It has been and continues to be a slow process. We had our site visit in September

where the trees were rated on a 1-5 scale and given ID's for future reference. Since then nothing but crickets and the response "we have your information and you will be receiving a letter soon". For us it is only 15 trees many of which were young or out of play. For many of our members it is a design changing experience and the superintendent is under extreme pressure to provide answers to the membership or owners.

Rumors of payout offers of hundreds of thousand dollars on top of tree removal cost have some clubs seeing green and ready to spend. As with any major product failure it is wise not to spend the money until it is in the bank as anything can happen.

What's next?

So if 2011 was okay can 2012 be good? Once again we can spend our winter planning and working hard to provide for success but so many things are out of our hands. We don't control the economy, gas prices or the weather. For the average course Dupont is not going to give us a bag of cash to make up our budget shortfalls.

What we can control is our attitudes and our ability to open our minds as we plan for 2012. What can we do better in our department to increase golfer satisfaction? Can we work closer with the golf shop and clubhouse to reduce duplicated duties and cost while increasing employee and golfer satisfaction? Are their simple changes we can make to the golf course to make it more enjoyable to play?

Good luck as you work on your winter projects and planning for a successful 2012 at home and work.

Be sure to stop and enjoy the sunrises our profession affords us. One day you will miss them.



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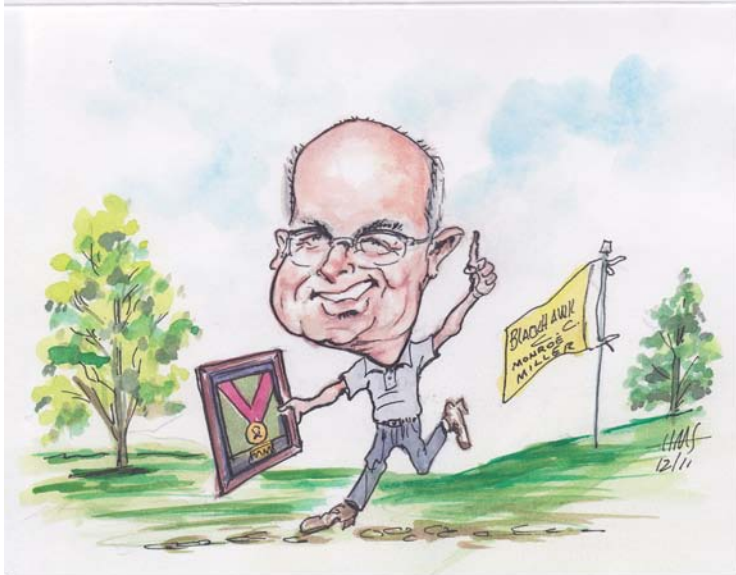
December 12, 2011

MONROE MILLER :

FROM ONE IKE GRAINGER AWARD WINNER TO
ANOTHER — CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR
DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO THE GAME OF
GOLF FOR SO MANY YEARS ... AND TO THE USGA
FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS.

YOU ARE A TRUE HALL OF FAMEE !

Gene Haas (USGA RETIRED)



Welcome to Matt Kinnard who is taking over for John Jensen in penning the 'Badger State Turf Clippings' column in *The Grass Roots*. John did a great job for over three years since taking over for Tom Wentz.

Be sure to provide your information and updates to Matt or the rest of the staff at DHD Turf and Tree Products.

Be sure to make your donation to the PAR4 Research fundraiser. The deadline to donate is Saturday March 21. Through your clubs donations over \$19,000 was raised for turf research at the University Of Wisconsin Madison the first two years.

Watch for advertising material from WGCSA to help you spread the word to your members and players. The online auction will run from April 1 to 9 and the more bidders the better. Consider using your clubs e-mails and locker room bulletin boards as tools to get the word out.

I hope you find the time to read this months Business of Golf column titled "Fired" by Peter McCormick. Although it is a few years old it is still very relevant as our industry has seen a number of job losses and layoffs.

Fired or not the information is valuable and may help you realize your current situation is not what you want it to be. Once you realize that it is up to you to change your situation or find a new position.

Gene Haas, retired Executive Director of the Wisconsin State Golf Association sent me the card to the left to congratulate Monroe Miller on his recent Ike Grainger Award.

The Grainger Award is given to USGA volunteers who serve more than 25 years. That long term commitment to our industry is to be congratulated. Thank you Monroe and Gene for sharing your time and talent with us!

I hope you can join me in thanking our 2011 advertisers listed on the next page. It is through their support we are able to bring *The Grass Roots* to your home and course.

Our writers provide you a great educational opportunity and the advertisers get make it possible. Be sure to thank them when you place your next order or have a meeting with your sales representative. Again let me repeat, be sure to thank our advertisers!

There is still time to register for the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas. There may never be a cheaper site and I guarantee the free education and networking is second to none. The paid sessions are great also but if you spend Monday, Tuesday and Friday at the sessions along with the sessions on the trade show floor on Wednesday and Thursday your head will hurt from all you have learned for your club. Save travels!



Latest Poll FROM WGCSA.COM

What is your standard HOC for Tees?

.250 (1/4 inch) or less - 3 vote(s)

.375 (3/8ths) to .250 - 21 vote(s)

.5 (1/2 in) to .375 - 30 vote(s)

>than a half inch - 6 vote(s)