

Variety

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

The dead of winter! And what a winter of variety it has been with near record warm days followed by deep freeze. A early blizzard to make snow enthusiasts happy followed by rain and then snow and then rain. You get the picture. It is too early to forecast or predict the health of turf coming out of winter. Little ice could be found after the early January thaw but every course is unique in topography and micro-climates.

Winter is a time for education and we have plenty of opportunities. The grand daddy of them all the Golf Industry Show is the first week of February and will offer attendees the chance to not only visit with vendors from around the world but to attend education sessions on every topic imaginable. The GCSAA Conference and Golf Industry Show offer everything from turf diseases to blogging and financial management to sustainable turf.

The WGCSA Spring Business Meeting agenda is out and will offer a great educational opportunity along with networking on Monday February 25th. On the agenda are Bob Vavrek with his popular year in review, Don Rice from John Deere Financial to compare leasing to buying equipment and GCSAA's John Miller to discuss Better Turf Through Water Management.

On Tuesday March 4th The Northern Great Lakes Golf Course Superintendents Association will have their spring educational conference in Wausau. On the agenda are Dr. Doug Soldat and Dr. Paul Koch from UW Madison, Dr. Kevin Frank from Michigan State and Dr. Robert Golembiewski from Bayer Environmental Studies

On March 13 and 14th in Waukesha Reinders will host their 21st Green Industry Conference. Although there is a trade show aspect of the event the education is great with Dr. Layne Treadway, Dr. Joe Vargas, Dr. Bingru Huang, Dr. Frank Wong, Dr. Karen Plumley, Dr. Zach Reicher, Dr. Laura Jull along with industry experts and Reinders own staff scheduled to speak.

The Reinders Conference is unique in

that it offers sessions for your entire staff with topics on irrigation and equipment maintenance.

All these events offer continuing education points along with the knowledge you can gain.

Congratulations to Colin Seaberg, Ozaukee CC for achieving certification with GCSAA in November and to Marc Davison and Doug Devries who renewed their certification in December.

The USGA has revised the stimp meter after many years as the 36" green stick that peaks the interest of golfers who guesstimate the results and what a number means to their putting skills. The new design is 36" long and is now blue. I realize that is not earth-shattering but the new design offers two notches to release the ball from. The second notch will cut in half the ball roll out to allow readings on smaller flat surfaces.

The results from the second shorter hole are not as accurate but are better than not taking one at all. The USGA is offering a \$35 rebate off the purchase price if your old stimp meter is sent back through June.

As we start the new year I offer thanks to the advertisers who make this publication possible. Many other chapters have gone to digital only magazines that are read by only a handful of members. As you can imagine printing is our number one cost so be sure to use and thank the advertisers you see on these pages and do not be afraid to twist a arm or two of someone you do not see advertising here.

I also need to thank the great writers we have who provide the educational and informational content each issue.

If you have a new idea or a project at your golf course the members would love to read about it. Perhaps as small as a new program you use or a revision to a hole or the entire golf course.

Articles can vary in length but pictures are key to the reader understanding what

you did or had before. If you not sure where to start feel free to e-mail me at grassroots@wgcsa.com to discuss your ideas.

We will miss the great articles from Dr. Kerns and hope the university can fill his valuable position soon.

2012 is officially over and numbers are being tallied and examined on what kind of year the golf industry had.

Early national numbers show a increase of rounds and revenue of 6-8%. Much of that can be attributed to weather but it is hard to quantify that statistically.

Operators I talk to in Wisconsin had a better year than the past couple leading to a feeling of optimism for the future. All operators compare this years numbers to last year but it is also recommended a three or five year average is used for a realistic picture of long term trends.

I felt we had increased business because of the warm spring but also because golfers seemed interested in playing more often. I remember Paul DeFosse the retired superintendent/manager at Brown County Golf Course explaining that a warm spring gets golfers thinking about golf before they have time to enjoy their other hobbies where a cold spring does the opposite.

Although the final numbers have not been released more courses closed than opened nationwide again in 2012. That is a good trend for the courses that remain but bad if yours was one of the courses closed.

Management consolidation continues with more sharing of staff and equipment and more maintenance staff's being laid off for all or part of the winter.

These overall challenging times can be made easier by following the research at the O. J. Noer Research Center and attending the many education sessions this spring.

Enjoy what is left of your winter and I hope we all have healthy turf in spring for masses of golfers. See you at the spring business meeting!

