

## A January Thaw?

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

Happy New Year and the best of thoughts to you and your family, friends and businesses. January provides time for reflection on the past years successes and challenges while planning for the new year.

It is a time for those in the Midwest to relax and enjoy some normal work hours and perhaps that vacation that aludes us during the golf season. For those in the golf industry January often serves as our "thaw" or time to relax and rewind from the year past.

As I finish this issue on the 28th of January I can safely say we in the Badger State are not getting an metorlogical January thaw. in 2014. Outside of one or two warm days the winter has been cold and unforgiving. Plenty of monings of below zero temeratures and widespread school closings not for snow but due to polar vortexts and wind chills dipping to 50 below zero or more.

In some areas of the state ice fisherman are forced to put extensions on their ice augers in order to through the ice to fish.

With the Golf Industry Show around the corner we are due for some warm days to accompany the longer daylight we are enjoying. February is a short month so not long after that the Spring Business Meeting will be held and hopefully spring will be on the horizon by then.

Have you gotten away from work for your thaw? Perhaps a vacation or even the Golf Industry Show in Orlando to learn new methods and network with thousands of your peers.

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If you follow the golf industry at all you cannot be too surprised at the latest course closing numbers from the National Golf Foundation. Closings outpaced openings for the 8th straight year as only 14 18-hole equivalent courses opened while 157.5 closed for a net reduction of 143.5.

According to the January edition of the foundation's Dashboard 66% of the closings were at courses with green fees below \$40. Since 2006 there has been a net reduction of 643 18-hole equivalent courses. This sounds like a lot but it is only 4% of the total peak supply. In the 20 year period from 1986 to 2005 U.S. golf grew by 40% as more than 4,500 new courses were added.

According to Jim Koppenhaver of Pellucid Corporation at their annual state of the industry address although 3.7 million people took up the game in 2013, 4.1 million left. Koppenhaver said "Golfer Attrition is the number one problem we have in the market."

The PGA of America through its Golf 2.0 player development initiative, had projected 28.7 million golfers in 2013 while the National Golf Foundation estimated 27.1. Koppenhaver's Pellucid Corporation was a bit more conservative at 25.7 million but all were high in their estimates as numbers show only 24.1 million golfers played in 2013. A far cry from 2000-2001 when 29.8 million golfers played 518 million rounds.

Fewer golfers, a poor spring and a non-existant fall led to only

462 million rounds being played. That number represents the fewest rounds since 1995 and well below the 10 year average of 492 million rounds.

According to Koppenhaver who gives his report with Stuart Lindsay of Edgehill Golf Advisors, course inventory needs to continue to decrease in order for a equilibrium of inventory and demand to be reached and courses to generally begin to be profitable.

This is fine overall but not if your course is one that either closing or consolodates with another facility leaving you searching for a new place to work.

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Good news continues in Central Wisconsin as Mike Keiser has selected the architect team of Bill Coore and Ben Censhaw to design the first Sand Valley Golf Course near Wisconsin Rapids. The short list of candidates included Tom Doak, David Kidd and Jim Urbina.

Coore and Crenshaw have recently renovated the Donald Ross masterpiece, Pinhursts famed number 2 course. The team will begin routing work this spring with construction to begin in fall of 2014. The Adams County location could open to members in 2016 and to the public in 2017.

Oliphant Companies of Madison will construct the first course on the 1,500 acre site.

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I hope to see many of you at the Golf Industry show in Orlando and the Spring Business Meeting in Fond du Lac. Both are great opprotunites to renew skills and relationships.

Please take to heart the encouragment from President Harrington to attend at least one associaiton meeting this season from the event calendar on page 42. I can attest I have never been to a education or monthly meeting where I have not learned something I can take back to improve our courses operation while having a little fun.

Think spring! 

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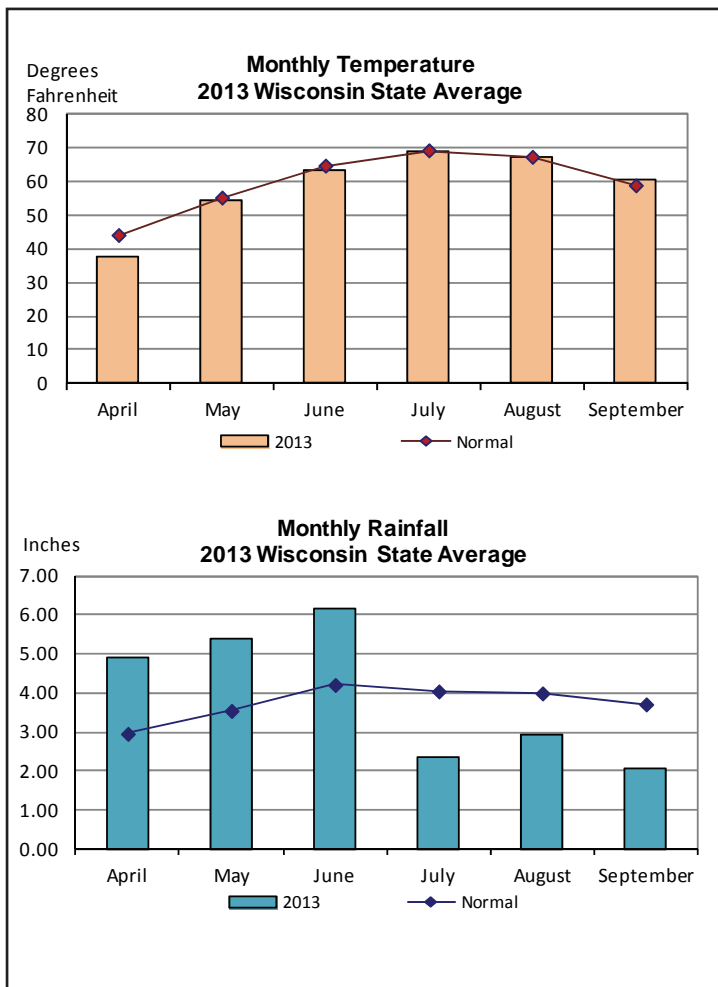
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# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



The 2013 monthly average monthly temperature and rainfall graphs so a cold spring followed by normal average temperatures while rainfall was heavy in spring and light in the second half of the growing season. (Information is courtesy of the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service)



Luke McGhee receives a \$1,500 J.R. Love Scholarship from WGCSA Vice President Jim Vanherynen at the WTA Research Day.

Luke is a graduate of Arrowhead High School in Hartland and is currently a senior in the turf program. He has also served as a student manager of the Wisconsin Men's Basketball Team.

He started studying Landscape Architecture but a discussion with Rod Johnson's brother Dave turned him onto golf course management.

Luke has done a internship and Erin Hills and plans to do another at Blackwolf Run this season before entering the job market in December.



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