

The Grass Roots



Vol. XXI, No. 4
July/August 1993

The Grass Roots is a bi-monthly publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, printed in Madison, Wisconsin by Kramer Printing. No part of *The Grass Roots* may be reprinted without expressed written permission by the Editor.

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About the Cover:

Illustrated are the favorite holes of the golf course superintendents hosting the State Open, State Amateur and the GMO.

1) This will be Tuckaway Country Club's last year as host of the Greater Milwaukee Open. Pat Shaw's favorite hole is the par 4, 381-yard 13th. It's a dogleg left with a large tree and large bunker marking the left corner. The water that surrounds the tee only adds to the beauty of the hole.

2) The State Amateur will be held in Madison during the third week of July at Blackhawk C.C. The par 3 5th hole is Monroe Miller's favorite. From the blue tee, the competitors are looking at a good shot of almost 200 yards over water to a narrow green. The green is protected from left to right with a formidable beach bunker. The green itself is undulating, and the immediate surrounds are interesting.

3) Ric Lange's favorite hole on his course is Meadowbrook's 7th, a 319 yard par 4. He likes it because it is isolated and the elevated tee affords a good look. It has a well-contoured, good-sized putting green. There are trees on the left and a lateral stream on the right. The fairway is severely undulated. Meadowbrook will host this year's State Open in Racine.

Cover artwork by Jennifer Eberhardt.

"Summer, be slow to stifle this perfection."

— Dilys Laing
from the poem "Summer, Be Slow"

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(L to R) Mike Semler, Bruce Worzella, Rod Johnson, Bill Knight, Pat Norton, Tom Schwab, Mark Kienert, Scott Schaller and Mike Handrich.

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SUDDENLY, SUMMER!

By Monroe S. Miller

Someday I want to live someplace for a time where the seasons come and go gradually, softly and comfortably.

Wisconsin's switch in seasons is almost always sudden, with a boom. You know, a warm autumn day in November yesterday and 18" of snow today. Or, as with this year, snow on April 26th and a record high on May 8th of 85 degrees and 87 degrees the next. Hey! How about 1.5" of rain on January 4th and a temperature of 40 degrees followed by 24 hours and a temperature drop of nearly 50 degrees.

All in one year. This year. In Wisconsin. But it could have been last year or the year before or the year before that.

Those 80 degree days that gave hint to the oncoming summer golf season were sorely needed in most areas of Wisconsin. Recovery from fairly widespread and frequently severe winter injury was slowed by the late and cool spring. Overseeding plans were often tabled by rain—in our town we were six inches above the normal rainfall mark in May. Some colleagues were convinced that it would be Memorial Day before their courses were dried out, firm and playable.

For most of us, May was a backwards month. The warm and rich days came and went early and most shivered in the cold and wet of the holiday weekend honoring our country's fallen soldiers. So did golf players.

Another difficult fact that made things worse for many was that some golf facilities in Wisconsin did not even get open until May. Late openings aggravate players and cash registers, and the effects tumble down through distributors to manufacturers. And we have a lot of golf course equipment manufacturers in our state.

As a matter of fact, even in the balmy southern climate of Madison, one of our courses did not really get opening until one of the first days of May. That's grim.

I received a letter from Tuck Tate in early May. He wrote "I hope your weather is and has been better than Michigan's." He reported that some of

our neighboring state's golf courses were suffering with winterkill also.

There is a lot of truth in the saw "misery likes company."

Anyway, it is behind us now, soon to be forgotten until winter arrives again in too few months.

•

We have five 68" Nationals in our equipment inventory that we use to mow green and tee surrounds three times a week.

These low technology machines haven't changed substantively in 25 years. No reason to, really. They are durable, easy to repair on those rare occasions when they need fixing, and can climb the old and steep surrounds of a golf course built many years ago.

Except for one thing. They are now powered by Japanese engines.

I almost didn't accept delivery of the first two I'd purchased that came with the foreign engines—no one had told me they were standard. Had I known, I likely would have specified a Briggs engine, just like those that the other three had.

Good thing I didn't know. It is very difficult for me to confess that these small Japanese engines put any similarly sized American-made engine from that time to shame. They made these little National triplexes seem as though they had undergone a complete redesign.

Sad to say—the foreign engines are quiet, smooth (absolutely no vibrations), fuel efficient and trouble-free. They always start. I was amazed and impressed.

And depressed. "Why can't we make products like that any more?" I wondered to myself more than a few times. Wisconsin was the home for the world's small engines for decades—Briggs & Stratton, Kohler and Tecumseh. I know these manufacturers are capable of giving us such a product. Why don't we see it?

That is all background information that helps explain why I am revved up about a new \$1 million engineering effort at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison. The program is aimed at helping small engine makers meet tougher federal pollution laws while protecting 90,000 jobs statewide.

The research effort is called "The Wisconsin Small Engine Consortium" and is being supported by Briggs & Stratton, Kohler, Tecumseh, OMC, Mercury Marine, Nelson Industries and Harley-Davidson.

Concern about meeting air quality standards that are to be phased in by the year 2000 stimulated formation of the group.

Small engines are currently unregulated for their emissions, and there is a big question as to how the manufacturers will meet the new standards. Of equal concern is the potential increased costs.

The research will focus on the unburned hydrocarbons given off by the small engines we use on so much of our golf course equipment. Obviously, that implies a lot of carburetor research.

The 90,000 jobs number should be clarified. Something over 17,000 people are employed by the consortium directly; 72,000 state residents work for companies that supply the consortium with parts, materials and services. Big bucks are involved here. The engine makers generate annual sales of more than \$4 billion!

Of the \$1 million to be spent, the state will provide \$470,000 and the balance will come from the companies.

The money will be used for materials and equipment to be used in the research. As with our turf research, grad students will help also. Five or six will be working on the project at any one time.

The UW-Madison College of Engineering has been doing engine research for nearly 50 years at its Engine Research Laboratory, another example of one of the things that makes it a world class institution.

By the way, American-made small engines, just like American cars, have drastically improved in recent times so that they are among the best.

•

We read a lot in our literature about what is good for us and what may be hazardous to our health.

The best news I have read in awhile comes from a team of researchers for the National Institute on Aging. They've discovered that dieting which prevents

(Continued on page 5)

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(Continued from page 3)

'natural weight gain' might be both futile AND hazardous to your health.

Now that's what I call good news.

They feel that middle-aged people who are 'slightly plump' might live longer than skinny people.

YES! I always figured those weight charts that determine what you should weigh were made up by skinny doctors.

No more. According to these more reasonable guidelines, I'm carrying around an 'acceptable' number of pounds. Those few extra pounds might be doing me some good, since I'm over 35.

This doesn't give license to be obese. That will never be good for you. But a few extra pounds, coupled with the exercise most of us get in our work, make us healthier than our skinny neighbor who is a banker or lawyer or preacher.

Three cheers for the plump among us!

I don't like retirements, and don't make a secret of that. I don't like having good green committee chairmen "retire", miss Jim Love in his retirement, and wonder what profs Worf and Newman are doing now that I don't see them much since they retired.

Clearly, I only dislike the retirement of people I like and who influence and help.

So I am sad to report on the retirement of Dr. George Sledge. He's been

working in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for 40 years. As the Dean of Academic Student Affairs for 28 years, one of his duties was administration of CALS scholarships. That included those given by the WGCSA, the WTA, the GCSAA and the NOR-AM Company. Any of our officers who dealt with his office knows how professionally it operated.

Nearly every graduate in the history of the UW's Turf Management Program was a student during Dean Sledge's tenure of office. That is a remarkable record.

What one should remember about this man is his concern—real and genuine—for students and for his ability at getting others to go along with his ideas. In an institution as large as the one in Madison, that last quality is critical for success. And success he had.

On a personal note, I am a member of the CALS Search Committee that will give Dean Roger Wyse four candidates to fill Sledge's position.

None will replace him.

How about that University of Wisconsin-Madison golf team? All they did was win the Big 10 Conference's men's golf tournament at the end of the second week of May.

The tourney was hosted by Indiana and played in Bloomington.

What a great team this is for all of Wisconsin! Unlike football and basketball and hockey (and how many other sports), all five of the golfers who played for the UW grew up in Wisconsin.

Their victory is even greater when considered in the context of an absolutely lousy spring which limited the amount of time they could practice.

As this is being reported, the UW team is NOT in the NCAA tournament, a gross injustice considering that Ohio State, Minnesota and Michigan State are. It seems even more unfair when you realize that the UW team beat three other teams at tournaments during the season that have also been invited—Kent State, Kentucky and Marshall.

Anyway, the Big 10 trophy in men's golf is in Madison for the first time since 1957. That should make us all proud.

What a relief—tree ring data from a 3,613 year old tree in South America shows no sign of global warming caused by human activity.

A couple of researchers reported that annual growing rings in an alerce tree, the second longest-living tree species known, show that the climate near the west coast of South America has warmed and cooled many times over

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thousands of years but that there has been no increase in temperatures during the industrial age.

They said their study does not contradict studies that have suggested warming trends in parts of the Northern Hemisphere. But the results indicate that any global warming isn't really global—at least not yet.

The pros who conducted the research—one from Colorado and one from Arizona—measured the width of rings in 96 trunk wedges or corings from standing alerce trees or from stumps of harvested trees in Chile and Argentina.

Temperatures experienced by trees directly affect the amount of growth each year and that is reflected in the width of the annual rings. As a result, it is possible to use the tree rings to reconstruct climatic conditions for the life of the tree.

Of course, any Wisconsin golf course superintendent, shivering in the cold of a late spring this year or in the cool summer of last year, could offer that evidence of "warming" is in short shrift.

It is rewarding to have our reservations confirmed independently.

From the April 1993 *Hortideas* comes the report that Tewksbury Gardens in Lebanon, New Jersey is selling a line of "self-fertilizing" figurines and planters called "PooPets".

They are made from "natural, organic, biodegradable" manure—sanitized cow manure, to be exact—handcrafted into animal figurines and pots. Among their offerings are 'dung bunnies, stool toads, T-burds and turdles.'

We've used Milorganite and Sustane and bone meal and blood meal and other organic products for some time now. Are we ready for this?

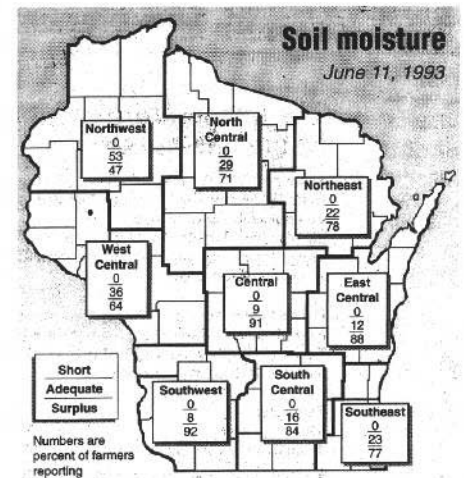
Designed to last more than a year outdoors, it makes you wonder if they have potential as tee blocks?

"I don't think so, Tim."

Have you had enough rain this season? My best guess would be 'yes', judging from the graphic presented by the Wisconsin Agriculture Statistics Service.

By mid-June, no area of Wisconsin was in short supply of moisture, while most places were in a surplus status.

It can be both a blessing and a curse, depending on whether you are trying to get a new irrigation system up



and running or a new course built. Your view depends on if you are trying to aerify or to get some fertilizer working.

It also proves it is impossible to please all of us at once.

The shortened season moves on. As this issue goes to press I am already thinking about the next one. And the next one is for September/ October.

Before you know it, the snow will fly again. Scary.

But until then, enjoy. See ya. 🍷

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WE NEED YOUR HELP

By Bruce Worzella



It seems only natural in this day and age that presidents of companies, organizations, and even the president of our great nation request help. Usually their requests cost you money in some way or another. Well, I am not asking for money, but our association needs 1994 monthly meeting sites.

Our membership encompasses a large area all around this wonderful state of Wisconsin, and to shorten your travel time to the bare minimum, I

ask if you would please consider hosting a monthly meeting.

I have hosted a few WGCSA monthly meetings—the Couples Get-A-Way, the WTA and the O.J. Noer Foundation golf benefits. Believe me, it really gives you a good sense of self gratification. And it assists with an important part of your association. So give a thought to having your colleagues visit your golf course in 1993.

I need to thank all of the WGCSA

members who purchased the pesticide signs. Your compliance demonstrates a spirit of cooperation and an environmental awareness. It also shows you care about the future of our profession.

I commend you on your efforts, along with Rod Johnson's dedication and hard work which made this project possible and successful.

I wish everyone an enjoyable season and hope to see many of you at our meetings. 🏌️

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WGCSA Convenes In West Bend For April Meeting

By Bill Knight

The April meeting of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association was held at the West Bend Country Club and hosted by Bruce Worzella. This was the first meeting to be held with the new format. The speaker was welcomed at lunch and after golf everyone was free to head home. The theory was to get members back home at a decent hour. The comments about this format were quite favorable.

After an excellent luncheon, Bob Vavrek of the USGA Green Section Great Lakes Region office talked to the subject of managing sand based putting greens. He noted that some of the major problems with these greens were inadequate fertilization, inconsistent topdressing and overwatering.

The recent release of the revised USGA putting green construction specifications gave Bob a natural topic of discussion. He stressed offsite mixing of the blend, good subsurface drainage and lots of fertilizer (up to 15 pounds of nitrogen/M the first year).

Worzella and his staff had the golf course in excellent condition for a two-man best ball event. The weatherman cooperated, providing good weather for the sixty golfers who took part. Hors d'oeuvres and golf awards followed. The day's winners (low gross) were:

FLIGHT A

First Place: Brian Schmidt (68)
Rod Johnson
Second Place: Ed Witkowski (70)
Jim Shaw

FLIGHT B

First Place: Joe Wollner (77)
Mike Handrich
Second Place: Charlie Shaw (77)
Pat Shaw

Low net awards were as follows:

FLIGHT A

First Place: Don Steinmetz (58)
Ray Shane
Second Place: Gordy Waddington (58.5)
Wayne Otto

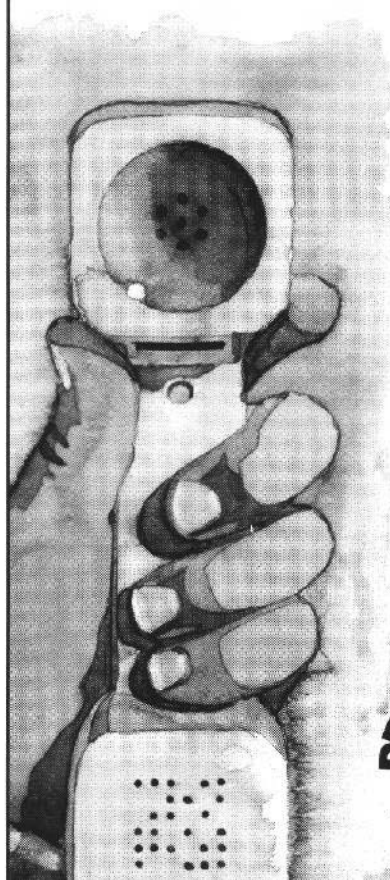
FLIGHT B

First Place: Bob Vavrek (58.5)
Scott Schaller
Second Place: Bob Belfield (60)
Jim Belfield
Closest to the pin on #18: Jim Ciha
Longest drive in fairway on #15: Jim Curtis

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TOURNAMENT TIME

By Monroe S. Miller

Some golf course superintendents love them; others loathe them. Then there are those who view golf tournaments as events that merely have to be dealt with as professionally as one can.

Count me in the first group. I'm of the mind that the excitement a tournament generates on our golf course makes all the planning and execution very much worthwhile. A well run, competitive tournament can be rewarding and fun.

Make no mistake. I don't consider "outings" golf tournaments. Outings, despite the fact that they make money all across Wisconsin, are too often disastrous for our golf courses. Few course superintendents can derive any pleasure from watching a group from "Joe's Auto Body" tear his course up with golfers who play once or twice a year and who drive carts anywhere they want. Some of us have wanted to offer bounties for some of these "guests".

But amateur golf tournaments are radically different. The competition isn't sullied by money; players are driven by love of the game and that old fashioned spirit of competition.

I hold to an increasingly outmoded

view in America these days that every worker ought to take pride in what he does, whether that happens to be raking sand bunkers or running a corporation.

My experience is that a tournament provides a perfect venue to heighten and amplify an attitude among our crew members of pride—pride in their workmanship.

It is also a great opportunity to express an enthusiasm for excellence. You hope kids carry it with them for the rest of their lives. I even hope their enthusiasm for excellence might rub off on some other members of our society.

One's own experiences in youth often shape adult attitudes. Although I did not work on a golf course or have the chance to experience tournament time while I was young, I did belong to 4-H. The projects I chose offered similar opportunities, however.

Preparing an animal for show or a crop for display or yield at a fair was my "tournament" back then. Getting ready for a fair required careful advance planning, a lot of work and the desire to come out with a blue ribbon.

And it didn't matter whether the planning was for a local community

fair, the county fair or even the state fair. The emotions were all the same.

That's the way it is with tournament time, too.

It hasn't seemed to matter if we are planning for the Madison City Women's Tournament, the City Men's Tourney, the Club championship or the WSGA State Amateur. We go about them about the same and the feelings generated by each are similar.

For the players in any tournament, at that moment, it's the most important event, kind of a U.S. Open, Masters and PGA all wrapped up in one.

Last year we hosted the Women's Western Golf Association's National Juniors Tournament. Clear to anybody watching the week long competition was the seriousness of the players. You could see it on their faces. You could see it when they practiced. It was a big league event for them, the "big dance".

And it was for us, too. As is so often the case, an event like this one is the focus for the whole year. The challenge is to have everything come together at once for the best competition possible. It was fun last year when, on the Saturday before the tournament,

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the Green Committee Chairman at our Club cornered me on the course. He was bursting with pride because he could feel the anticipation of the tournament.

"The course has a 'mystical feeling'," he said to me. His words were music to my ears.

He wasn't the only one enjoying the atmosphere created by a golf tournament. Although some will always prefer not giving up their course for anything, most feel otherwise. Tournaments are good for golf and most players want what is good for the game.

I've also noticed a tournament that involves planning and arrangements by our members adds a lot to the spirit around the Club. It brings diverse groups together and seems to give a lot of them great satisfaction.

Over the years I have also discovered that often the "crowd" following a tournament consists of a lot of our own members. That proves that players are fans, too, and enjoy watching tournaments on their own course.

At no time, I've observed, are department heads more focused on the same point. During normal club days, we three have our own responsibilities

and problems that fully occupy our days. At tournament time, all efforts are ultimately put into the event. Camaraderie is never higher among us.

I know I am not alone in my emotions about tournaments. I have watched more than a few tournament rounds over the years with colleagues, very much enjoying the role of a golf fan.

Superintendents who travel many miles to see a U.S. Open or to play in the GCSAA's annual golf tourney like them, too.

Any friend or fellow superintendent who has gone to the Masters called that tournament 'the ultimate sporting event'. Need any more evidence that golf course superintendents make good golf tournament fans?

By the final round of the four day WWGA tournament we hosted last summer, the young guys on our staff were tired. So were Chad and Dave and I. The good thing about the last day of competition was that the split shifts were over.

On this day, by ten o'clock a.m. or so, everyone was free to go home and relax or sleep or do whatever.

But not one of them left. The picture that will always be with me is of 15 or

16 of those young people walking down from the shop toward the golf course. Their mood couldn't have been happier; the joking and horsing around made that clear.

Despite their weariness, they were heading out to follow the leaders from the seventh hole on. They wanted to see who was going to win the tournament they had put so much into.

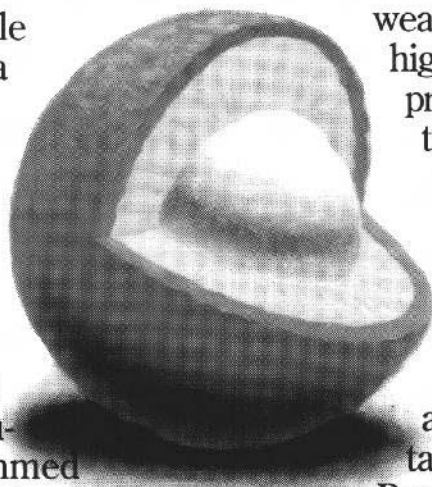
You couldn't mistake them, either. The black golf caps and white club shirts told one and all who they were. More than a few others following the tournament recognized that—competitors, members, media—and commented on a job well done by them. I couldn't have been more proud, of them and the job they had done.

So we are pretty excited around here, anticipating the color and competition and thrill of another big event this summer. We've worked hard to make sure the course is as good as it can be. Now we are wrapping up details, waiting for the big week to get here.

And anticipating the rush we know we will all get from tournament time! 🏌️

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