

The Grass Roots

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About the Cover:

Old Tom Morris, common ancestor for all golf course superintendents, at his golf course in St. Andrews, Scotland, the ancestral home for golf course superintendents. See story on page 23.

Cover design and artwork by designer and marketing specialist Jennifer Eberhardt.

"It was a wonderful spring morning. The air had a fresh washed smell, and you wondered how it could be that the world is so old and still looks and feels so brand new...The slant of the sun, wet on the grass, the buds popping out, a glistening plow rising out of the furrow to make its turn and the long first black mark behind it exploded by robins—how could anything ever have been newer?"

— William Steuber
Wisconsin writer

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Front row (Left to Right): Mark Kienert, Mike Semler, Scott Schaller, Mike Handrich. Back row (Left to Right): Kris Pinkerton, Dave Smith, Joe Kuta, Dave Brandenburg, Bruce Worzella.

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VALUABLE MEMBERSHIPS

By Michael Semler



I have just returned from the GCSAA Conference and Show in San Francisco and started to reminisce about past conferences I had attended and my membership in the GCSAA. Like all of my expenditures, I try to gauge the cost of that expense with the benefit portion. My attendance at the GCSAA Conference and my membership in the GCSAA are no different.

For some members, these are very easy questions to answer. The benefits far outweigh all of the costs, and a membership is a definite yes. For others, it can be a real dilemma. I happen to be one of those individuals who believe that my membership and my attendance at conferences is invaluable.

However, do not mistake my last statement with my feeling that the GCSAA can't improve on many fronts. I believe there are many improvements that should be made, but I also believe that this is neither the forum nor the place to address all of the things I would change at the national level.

How ironic, however, that an individual should have to use a cost/benefit analysis on a membership in one's own professional organization.

It would seem it should be a "no question type of question". I would assume the benefits of a membership would be very straightforward. In reality it is not that simple. Like many professional organizations, our own organization, the WGCSA, deals with this type of analysis and question constantly. There are still many golf course superintendents in Wisconsin who refuse to believe that their membership is an invaluable tool. This is certainly a limited viewpoint. Now let me explain.

If you take in all of the educational programs that can be attended in any given year, this factor alone may or may not sway you to be a member in the WGCSA. But you must remember that the continuing education is only one facet of our organization. You are forgetting about the other 80% of what the WGCSA does for you.

For instance, how about the \$13,500 annual donation which is being directed towards research and scholarships. Of that total, \$10,000 is directed to putting green management at our own O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Facility. I consider this to be a monumental amount for a state organization such as our own!

We must also consider our organization's ability to promote the golf course superintendent as a professional on a state and local level. Our representation at a state golf expo can surely be looked at as a positive impact on the golfer. Our representation at the state level of government has predicated us as leaders in the industry, as opposed to followers. Are these not valuable traits of a WGCSA membership?

How about the ability of members to meet, converse and exchange ideas with other superintendents from around the state and region. Or our ability to disseminate information through our bi-monthly publication and various mailings throughout the year. Exchanging ideas and information is certainly a valuable portion of what your membership does for you.

When taken as a whole product, as opposed to any single facet, a membership in the WGCSA becomes a real bargain. And so it is with a membership in the GCSAA. When looked at on an individual basis, each facet of the GCSAA membership probably does not warrant the current cost. However, when looked at in its entirety, the membership takes on a new and valuable light. ♣

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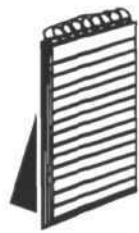
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SPRING THINGS

By Monroe S. Miller

It doesn't seem at all possible that spring is here, or at least almost here. By the time this issue hits the newsstands, the GCSAA conference will be recorded and Reinders' big conference will be around the corner. EXPO 95 is done. Spring Valley's meeting has met. The Green Section meeting and the UW Extension Turf Conference are close. One or two outstate conference remain, but that is about it.

Grass time and golf time are due to arrive. I've met few colleagues who aren't anxious to get the season underway. The other remaining anxiousness is the final answer on winter injury. Once that is answered, one way or the other, we can get on with doing what we love doing most—managing a golf course.

For the record, snow and frost depth reports from around Wisconsin for the noted dates are included. The gravediggers of the state have done another great job in keeping track of winter conditions for the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service.

Congratulations to Tom Schwab on his new job. He is exactly what the research farm needed at this point in its history. Wayne Kussow, Chuck Koval, Frank Rossi and Tom Harrison (along with other hiring committee members) deserve our thanks for their choice.

Schwab brings lots of things to the Noer job that few others could. He's a UW-Madison Turf Management grad

and has a deep and special interest in his alma mater. He's experienced—Monroe CC (superintendent for ten years), South Hills before that and Blackhawk CC before that. He is "mature" (crowding 40!), and well established.

Proximity is in his favor—he and Diane and the kids live in Verona, probably five minutes from his new place of work.

Anyone who's been a successful golf course superintendent, like Tom, has practiced some basic principles that worked at a place like the research facility. I am thinking of neatness, an orderly approach to work, a willingness born out of experience to do what you are told, people management and machinery management.

Clear to anyone who ever attended one of our WGCSA meetings at Monroe CC is the fact that Tom really knows how to grow grass. And he did it economically.

Like all of us in the WGCSA, Tom spent his career working under the jeweler's eye, always under close scrutiny and inspection. How perfect—instead of taking any offense from outside opinions, he will be able, by habit, to view such opinions constructively.

Finally, what the Noer Facility has is a manager who is upbeat, happy, optimistic, full of humor and almost always in a good mood. He will be a pleasure for all the faculty, staff and user groups to work with.

So I am sounding my three cheers

for Tom. Bets are good I'm as happy about his presence there as he is.

The WGCSA is a major contributor to the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association, and the WTA is a considerable donor to the UW-Madison. The WTA has lots of company.

The January 27th, 1995 edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published the ranking of the Top 10 universities for research funds. The University of Wisconsin-Madison was in third place. The ranking was developed from National Science Foundation data.

The UW-Madison climbed up a notch from a year ago. Perennially in the Top 5, the improvement is a gauge of the strength of the Madison campus. Clearly it is among the elite of the nation's research universities.

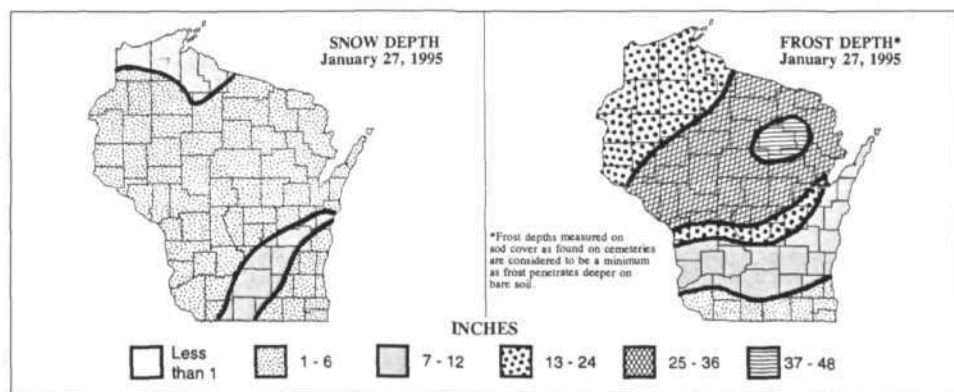
But, then, we knew that!

Steve Krause, forest entomologist for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, recently reported that the intensive spraying that has been going on has reduced Wisconsin's gypsy moth population by 72 percent. Sub zero temperatures in January also helped by killing large numbers of gypsy moth eggs.

The good news is two fold: our trees will be at less risk, and since numbers are down the amount of spraying required in 1995 will also be reduced. Fewer than 30,000 acres in nine counties will be treated when spring arrives. Last year 51,000 acres were sprayed.

Wisconsin has been fortunate to have avoided the tragic results of massive numbers of gypsy moths. They can strip trees entirely of their leaves, and they feed on several hundred different types of plants. The defoliation can lead to injury or death of host plants.

It seems we owe thanks to DATCP for doing such a good job in keeping



the problem under control. Our trees thank them, too.

We need a golf house with a museum and library in the state. I was reminded of it in January when Tom Harrison was sharing old photographs of Maple Bluff with me. They need an archive for a home.

One of our members passed away a while ago and his wife brought me an old ground driven walking greensmower. "I thought you might want this," she said. "If you don't, throw it away." Here is a picture of this treasure.



It is a WEBB mower, made in England, and it has a 12" cut with wooden rollers. Also in my shop are Jim Love's, Bill Sell's and Woody Voigt's collectibles. All need a museum and library for a home. Add in old brass sprinklers, old cup cutters, a hand aerifier and everything else I have, and you'll have the start to a good collection

Consider all the things sitting in your own shops, all over Wisconsin, and the need really comes into focus. Visit, if you haven't already, Gene Haas' office and have him show you all he's collected on behalf of golf in Wisconsin—old clubs, books, tournament mementoes, trophies, autographs and more. You will demand action!

This was an original goal of the Golf Foundation of Wisconsin, and probably still is. But maybe we will have to consider other options since the GFW is a busy group.

Possibly this will be a retirement project for some WGCSA members when they reach that station in life.

Let this serve as our collective birthday greeting to the USGA. Founded in December of 1894, this wonderful organization is primarily responsible for what golf is today.

The observance will last throughout 1995, but was started last December 8 in Manhattan at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The evening was concluded with an address by the great American writer John Updike. The lines he spoke that all golf course superintendents will love are these: "This out-of-doors simplicity surely lies at the heart of golfing bliss, as we are reminded by our logo of two New England boys—Ouimet and Lowery—out for a walk on a drizzly September day. All it takes for a golfer to attain his happiness is a fence rail to throw his coat on, and a target somewhere over the rise."

Let those sentimental words serve as an inspiration as we head into the new season.

Happy birthday, USGA! 🏌️

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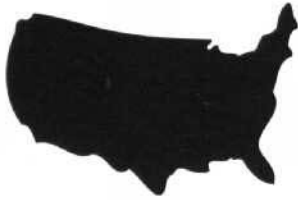
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A Short Guide for Miniature Golf Course Management

By Dr. Robert Gray

Editor's Note: We are going to have to put this author on our payroll! This is the third or fourth time that Bob Gray has granted permission to reprint one of his pieces in this feature. These musings are proof that PhDs (and agronomists!) do have a sense of humor. Dr. Gray writes for THE GREENERSIDE, official publication of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey and this short guide appeared on p. 18, Vol. 18, No. 1 issue for January/February 1995. The award winning journal is edited by his spouse of 25 years, Ilona. They make quite a team. You will have the chance to meet them since they are both attending the GCSAA conference in San Francisco. Ilona will attend the Chapter Editors Seminar and report on the conference proceedings that take place after the seminar. Bob is tagging along for the pleasure of some warm California weather. Thanks to both for permission to reprint.

This past summer I had to opportunity to play on one of the more prestigious miniature golf courses on the Jersey shore. I introduced myself as a frequent contributor to "The Greenerside" in the hope of getting a complimentary game or at least a better tee time. The manager, who had not heard of "The Greenerside" or of the GCSANJ, made me wait my turn in line, and pay the full greens fee. Fortunately there was no caddie necessary or golf cart requirement and no club membership fees.

The entire situation struck me as one large opportunity! Hundreds of miniature courses up and down the shore and none of them practicing scientific management. Think of the training grants, registration fees, and new business opportunities if miniature golf were held to some environmental standard. I am on the cutting edge of this sort of thing and have already begun working on my manual for the miniature golf course. Once it's completed, I plan to apply for an EPA grant to pilot a regulatory program next summer. Don't laugh. I'll be on the beach with federal money behind me.

Every grant needs a buzzword and mine will be "IMP" (Integrated Management Practices for the miniature course). A heavily trafficked par-36 course cries out for this type of attention. Don't snicker! Just because it's less than a quarter acre does not mean that it is not subjected to some sort of insect, weed, and fungus pressure. I have scouted dozens of courses and concluded that these problems are real. Hmm. I wonder if my investment in this scouting can be recouped in my EPA grant?

Polyturf Management:

This is simple. Keep it glued down and keep it green. Replace when wear is evident. All of the cultivars of polyturf used in New Jersey are low lying perennial types. They have compact crowns and shallow roots, often appearing more woven to the mat than as a true root. The actual manual will have detailed drawings and fancy Latin names for all the parts.

Weeds:

There are two basic weeds that are found on miniature golf courses. The first is *Nicotiana tobaccum* which occurs either as the filterum subspecies or the regular subspecies by taxonomists and has been classified as a cultivar. IMP scouts should inspect the course and physically remove these. No herbicide required. During evening play hours, a second weed species, *Cannabis sativa*, can be found on certain courses. The handbook recommends that the management immediately contact the DEP, or is it DEA, hotline for this weed.

Fungus:

Fungus is a continuous bother on these courses. Although it does not attack the "polyturf" directly, it leaves a slimy and often slippery playing surface. I sent several samples to the Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Laboratory and obtained the following recommendation. Use of prescription or over-the-counter foot treatments will provide temporary relief from itching and can be helpful adjuncts to an overall treatment problem. Reduction of moisture and avoidance of contact with feet will also be required.

Insects:

Termites on the wood supporting the polyturf can be a problem. For this, contact any professional with a category 7B certification. The real problems are treating the woolly polyester crown borer and the short shrifted root weevil. These are species endemic to New Jersey and are considered so rare that they are endangered. No treatment is permitted since, like my miniature golf course management manual, they only inhabit summer fantasies.

Waiting for the warm sunshine . . . Dr. Bob. 🍷



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OPENING DAY

By Monroe S. Miller

Despite what has been a relatively mild and abbreviated winter all across Wisconsin, I am ready for it to end. Yes, I have enjoyed the normality winters bring to my life. But when March arrives, so does my longing for opening day. I doubt I am much different from nearly all golf course superintendents in that regard.

Who among us isn't tired of gray days—did the sun shine at all in January until the very last week? Who isn't weary of the dreary look of dirty snow, no snow, dirty vehicles and cold feet? And I would like to meet the guy or gal who prefers (after ample rest) the bleached out look of a dormant golf course to the beauty of a green one.

Change. Maybe that is the best thing about managing a golf course in Wisconsin. About the time you are sick of one season and all it brings, a new one looms on the calendar. And at that time of transition, the upcoming season is **always** your favorite! Right now, I am dying for a warm spring day and the colorful sight of players on our golf course.

We've got emotional companionship this time of year. Walk into the golf shop at your course when the day is bright, the snow is melting and the temperature is warm in March. There they are—golfers—visiting with the golf pro and with each other, handling clubs, checking out what's new, trying on shirts and shoes. And they are a happy lot! Good spirits reign and everyone—**everyone**—wants to know "when do you think you will open?" The answer, of course and always, is—"ask God and let me know what He says!"

We never actually close our golf course until the snow begins to melt in March. Then the signs go up: GOLF COURSE CLOSED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The reason we close is to remove the temptation from these overly anxious people who cannot wait to hear the click of a golf club against a bright new Tittlist golf ball. Men who live disciplined lives all year and who always follow the rules fall prey to some overwhelming desire to sneak out and "hit a few." Trips to the local driving range or even a golf excursion to Florida or Arizona don't seem to help. They aren't the same as golf at their home course.

I understand what the man who is standing on the cart path between our clubhouse and the tenth tee is feeling. He's soaking in the view, less of the ice that may still cover Lake Mendota and more the patches of green grass and the very fat buds on trees he is close to. The sun feels really good to him, too. He is usually walking slowly, jingling the change in his pocket and daydreaming about opening day with hope it isn't too far off.

It seems at this time of year all of us are asked "when do we normally open the golf course?" In anticipation of such queries in 1994, I listed opening dates for the previous 21 years for our course in the March issue of our club publication. One of our members, an emeritus professor in the

medical school, took it one step further for the colleagues in his foursome. He shared it with me, and because I found it interesting, here it is for your edification.

I provided dates. He calculated what day in the year each was. From this he calculated the average and the standard deviation. He took that data, plotted it on a graph with *day of year* on one axis and *year* on the other and produced a neat graphic that illustrates opening day variability. Below are the data:

YEAR	DATE OPENED	DAY IN YEAR
1973	31 March	90
1974	7 April	97
1975	16 April	106
1976	3 April	93
1977	31 March	90
1978	5 April	95
1979	14 April	104
1980	17 April	107
1981	26 March	86
1982	15 April	105
1983	13 April	103
1984	3 April	93
1985	4 April	94
1986	1 April	91
1987	25 March	84
1988	31 March	90
1989	7 April	97
1990	28 March	87
1991	2 April	92
1992	4 April	94
1993	22 April	112
AVERAGE		96
STANDARD DEVIATION		8

For those who are curious, the average (or mean) is just that—add all the day assignments up and divide by 21. The answer is 96. Next, find the difference between 96 and each year's assigned day number; some will be + values and some will be - values. It doesn't matter. Square these numbers and summate them. Divide the sum by $n - 1$ (20). The square root of the answer is the standard deviation. Or you could, as Professor Kussow suggested as an alternative, hit the standard deviation pad on your calculator!

(Continued on page 11)

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