



A Life Well Lived

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

The thought of him comes to me at odd times - in the dimness of twilight while I'm reading, at midnight when I should be sound asleep or in the bright sunshine when I am working on the golf course. It makes me feel somewhat guilty - I am thinking of Jim Belfield more now that he has left us than when he was here among us. I took him for granted, I guess.

Or, I am now realizing what a truly great man he was, right in our midst, as close as a phone call. There clearly was a subconscious comfort in that. If someone, anyone, needed something, he was there.

Tom Harrison and I went to the visitation together. We visited about Jim most of the way to Milwaukee and back home to Madison. The conversation we had about Jim was probably like hundreds of other conversations about him between then and Fathers Day when he was killed. Everything that was said about him by Tom and me was positive because that was the kind of life he led.

We sat in my truck in the parking lot of the funeral home for awhile, gathering the courage to go and see him for the last time. I was wondering what a person could say to Bev that would offer any comfort. Now I know that would have been impossible. After all, who would know better than his family what a wonderful person he was; no one could have told them what they already knew.

Almost all of the photos assembled in the hallway of the funeral home were family pictures, making it clear Jim was a man who had his priorities straight.

Yet I knew him as a result of our common career. He was a real leader, displaying maturity back in the early eighties that was beyond his youth. Many times I sought his opinion during the time I was president of the WGCSA. After all, he had preceded me in that office and had gotten the chapter positioned to really move forward. He made it easier for those who succeeded him.

Then and now, I was impressed at how much he had accomplished while so young. I am sure he was the youngest person ever honored with the WGCSA Distinguished Service Award; and surely he was one of, if not the youngest president ever elected by our members.

And I never heard anything but good about the course he managed for so many years. Excellence was also what Jim was about. He was open with his golf course operation, sharing what he knew and had

learned, and he had lots to share with us.

For me, more than anything, the most telling thing about Jim Belfield was that everyone, and I mean absolutely everyone, spoke highly of him. Have you ever heard even one negative thing about him? I never have. He was able, by simply being himself, to win the hearts of all of us.

It seems so lame, so inadequate, to use the trite phrase that Jim's life was a life well lived. But it was. He accomplished more in his short time on earth than most could hope to in a long life.

They always say, when a good person has passed on, that he is in a better place. That may well be. But I still, desperately, wish Jim was with us.

I am really going to miss him. ♣

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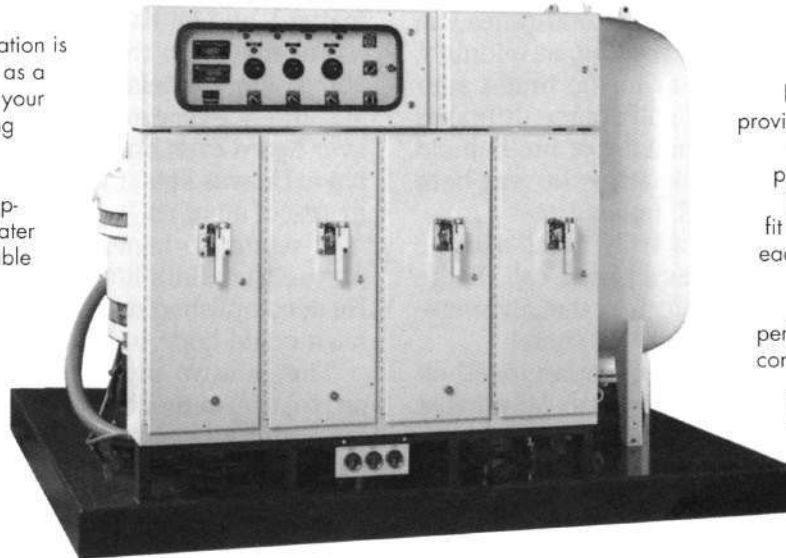
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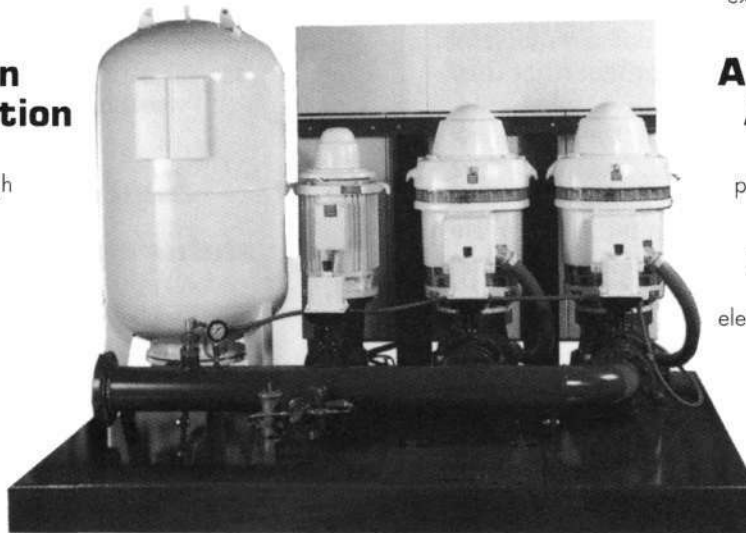
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Despite Heat and Humidity in July, Wisconsin Superintendents Persevere



By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

What started out as an early and excellent year for Wisconsin golf courses turned ugly in July, just about the time the summer weather turned hot and humid. Really hot and really humid.

Although the worst days were at the end of the month - the 30th was the worst day in our area with heat indices in the 115 degree range - tough weather actually started before the Fourth. By the time it was over, July was one of our hottest ever and extended to 20 the number of consecutive months above normal in temperatures.

Pythium, brown patch, root suffocation, heat damage - the results

were all the same. Older courses suffered most from the heat because of the higher *Poa annua* population. Higher budget courses could handle disease outbreaks better, but no amount of money mitigates the effects of high heat and humidity. In isolated areas the problems were exacerbated by excessive rainfall which only added to the troubles.

It was all discouraging, but for veteran superintendents the scene was a repeat from previous years and we can tell you with absolute certainty that it will happen again. The summer of '99 will remind me most of '95 except that year was

one of greater duration of the heat and humidity. But the years of '88 and '76 were as hot or hotter and they were accompanied by a drought. The story I like best involves Cherokee's George Magnin. He's always upbeat and positive, but on the afternoon of the 30th he was more than concerned, especially as he checked out the putting green near the clubhouse. He went into the kitchen, asked the chef for a meat thermometer and went back to the putting green. At a depth of 1/2 inch, the temperature was 140 degrees: *beef - medium!*

Golf turf suffered. So did most

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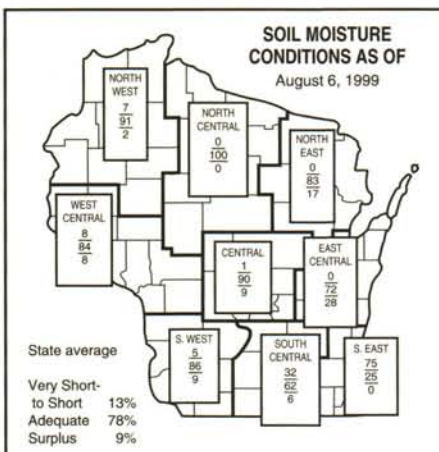
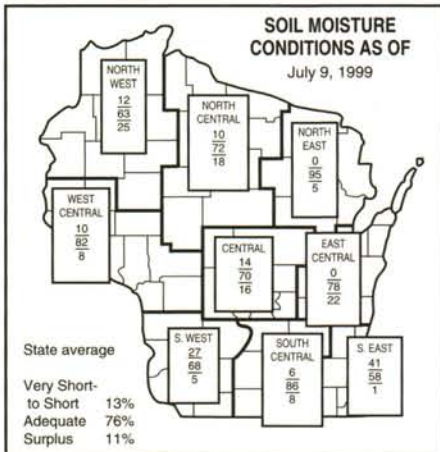
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other agricultural enterprises. From disease, just like us. From high temperatures, just like us. Animal agricultural - dairying - is very vulnerable during heat extremes. Production from dairy cows drops dramatically during heat waves like the 11 days at the end of July, and at its worst, animals were dying at a frightening rate.

The heat had a human toll, as well, taking the lives of nearly a dozen people in Wisconsin, including one here in our town.

The good news from this was the weather turned to our favor in August. The weather change, along with some alterations in management, put most courses on the road to recovery.

The Wisconsin Ag Stat summaries are here for your review.



Lately, in terms of recent years, we all seem to be either searching for or offering up theories about the oddball weather events we have been having. It has been everything from mild weather, flooding, heat, extreme cold, short winters, tornadoes, droughts and all the rest. We have heard El Nino, La Nina, global warming and all that. There has been no shortage of climate change theories. New scientific data seems to have generated a lot of the theories advanced. Or so I thought.

I was doing some reading and came across an interesting bit of information you might appreciate. It seems that during the first two centuries of settlement of the American seaboard, a popular misconception arose about the observed climate. Residents wondered where the record snowfalls of yesteryear had gone. They weren't having the harsh winters that their grandfathers and great-grandfathers spoke about. Amateur observers and philosophers pondered these questions and offered a variety of answers.

Sound familiar? Though they had no actual facts to offer, most colonists believed that the weather had grown milder and that the springs came earlier and autumns lasted longer.

Dr. Hugh Williamson of North Carolina expressed these ideas in an article he wrote for the very

first issue of *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* in 1771. His article was titled "An attempt to account for the climate change observed in the Middle Colonies in North America."

Dr. Williamson's thesis was that the cutting down of the forests for farms and settlements had produced a warming of the soil for two reasons. First, the falling of the trees allowed easterly winds to penetrate more deeply into the country, bringing temperate marine influences inland. Second, the bare soil received and stored more solar heat than did forested land, and snow melted more quickly when exposed to direct sunlight.

In addition, some colonials suggested that the rise of urban communities with heated buildings and smokepots were leading to a milder climate. They claimed the same thing had happened in Europe.

These were the first ideas of many over the succeeding decades about climate change. Even today, with satellites and monitoring equipment, the change theories are still that - theories.

And mysteries.

I received the following humorous photo from Dave VanAuken, the talented superintendent at Timber Stone in Iron Mountain in the UP. Dave's golf course crew found the big bull thistle in a rock drainage ditch on their 17th hole.

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The trunk circumference was seven inches! And the darn thing was 10' 2" tall.

It was bigger than some ever-green Christmas trees, so the crew decorated it with Christmas ornaments! Bill Kehoss, assistant superintendent, is 6'2" tall, and the edge of an 8' walk-in door is barely visible on the right of the tree.

The guys at Pine Mountain have a sense of humor. By the way, Dave will be on the Symposium program this fall in Milwaukee.

Kudos to:

1. Staff and faculty at the Noer Facility for a terrific field day. The WTA board members and committee people who helped plan it deserve a lot of credit, too. Many who would know remarked it was one of the best they've attended anywhere at anytime.

2. Danny Quast and his crew for a successful PGA championship. Not many course managers can claim hosting two of the four major championships. Great job.

3. Rob Schultz, sports writer for The Capital Times, wrote an excellent article about the damaged and diseased turf on Wisconsin golf courses. He was thorough and articulate, like always. We owe him a big thanks for always helping us. The article was titled "Summer of Discontent."

Let me see if I've got this right: Hillary Clinton now says the fact that her husband is a womanizer and cheater and has shacked up with other women during their marriage is his grandma's fault. Would that be instead of the right wing conspiracy she blamed a year ago?

Please, Hill. Slick is not a "good, very, very good" person or president. He's a convicted liar, a philanderer and has no problem breaking promises. By most defin-



"Christmas in July"

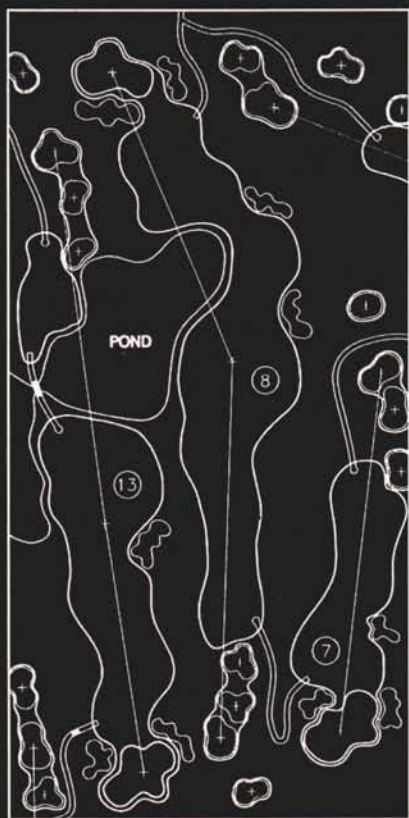
itions that makes him a scumbag.

And Hillary's run at the Senate seat for New York State makes her a carpetbagger. I hope the Empire Staters can see through her. Her choice to not only stick with Slick, but to promote him, shows her to be a person of very poor judgment and very low self esteem. New Yorkers could do a lot better than her.

Autumn is my favorite time of the year; from the dusty colors of blue chicory, Queen Anne's lace and goldenrod to the bright colors of maple and sumac, it is a time when the outdoors offers unsurpassed beauty. I plan on relaxing during some afternoons in Camp Randall and Lambeau Field, maybe I will find time for a trip to see the fall foliage display in New England, or continue my search for the philosophers stone.

Autumn was meant to be enjoyed. Please do. ♡

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Ozaukee Country Club Hosts WGCSA June Meeting

By **Mike Lyons**, Golf Course Superintendent, Old Hickory Golf Club

On June 7th, Wayne Otto welcomed 113 golf course superintendents, affiliates and guests to Ozaukee CC for golf and some good conversation.

The event for the day was a four-man bestball with handicap. First place went to the team of Ron Grunewald, Scott Hellenbrand, Loyd Cook and Riley Wulz. Second place team members were Steve Schmidt, Bruce Worzella, Brian Schmidt and Rick Weiterman. Dick Milaeger, Dan Williams, Mark

Thurrow and Bob Emmerich captured third place. Flag event winners, all closest to the pin, went to Dean Cannestra, Mark Thurrow, John Krutilla, Shawn Hilliard and Mark Hjortness.

The entire staff at Ozaukee is to be commended. The golf course was in outstanding shape and was truly a treat to play. Thanks to everyone there. And let's hope it is not another 35 years before we are invited back! 🌿



Host Wayne Otto gives a few last minute instructions before the event.



Berwick, Schmidt, and Davison relax before golf.



Lunch time!



Gary Johnson shows his loyalty to his alma mater - WISCONSIN!



Anticipation was high as hole assignments were made.



Playing conditions at Ozaukee were excellent.

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Three Simple Questions

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

In my mind lately there are a few simple questions that keep bugging me. These questions are the nagging, recurring sort... as opposed to the life and death... or meaning of life type of unanswerable question. The life, death, and the meaning of it all type of questions are really not possible to answer. There are many different interpretations and opinions to the deep questions of life.

Rather, these three simple questions pertain to the world of golf. Golf is unique in that the philosophers among us can find the quiet and solitude needed to explore the human mind and answer a few questions... while playing or working... out on the golf course!

This ad libbed little essay will attempt to answer these questions... that nag at all of us golf course types from time to time.

The first question... has many subquestions... and is one of course management and the management team. The question is what constitutes a good team...

the superintendent, golf pro, and club manager all working harmoniously, I would suppose? How often does this truly happen... and for what duration? And why, when a good management team is developed over a period of time... do external circumstances always seem to screw things up?

Over the last five years, our little group at Nettle Creek worked very closely and harmoniously... to the mutual benefit of all. The main staff people were myself and our PGA professional. Our working relationship was just about as ideal as possible... largely due to the fact of both of us having ownership stock. We were also overseen... quite closely at times... by four other owners who always had a keen interest in everyday happenings and our mutual long term future.

Too many owners resulted in the end, though, in there being too many chiefs and too many strongly held, incorrect opinions. As the season progressed and finished up last fall, it became apparent that

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changes were due and something monumental was in the wind.

Our group mutually agreed to sell the course to one of our existing owners who had the most interest by far in staying involved. In the course of the negotiations it also became apparent that our PGA professional... who had done so much for us in terms of sales, marketing, and promotion of the game of golf to our golfers... was not going to be retained!

So this guy... who is arguably the best PGA professional that I have ever worked with... who was a large part of our success from 1995 - 1998... was not going to be asked to join the new management group! Something was very fishy here... I thought!!

So the original first question of what constitutes a good management team... is answered in that it's always good people working together!

And we had it! Why didn't it last for a longer duration? The answer is so simple and always the same... people screw things up! The successful PGA guy let his ego get a bit out of hand... creates a few adversaries for himself. The adversaries overreact to the max... and make sure that the guy gets his

wings clipped.

Or the good superintendent is too concerned with the course itself... and forgets that in a public situation... lots and lots of people must play the course for it to succeed. Small problems become big ones... and people end up leaving for greener pastures.

This question is sort of like why any professional sports team has such a difficult time repeating for the championship... it's much easier getting there than it is staying on the top! But it does tick a guy off when external forces or 'powers that be' tinker with a good course management team and do nothing but make the situation so much worse!

The second question posed is simply this... does a golf course superintendent need to play golf in order to succeed in this business?

Obviously the answer must be... definitely not! Logic show us that there are plenty of very good, very successful superintendents that choose not to play this great game... yet their courses are clearly as good as any other! Does a successful baseball manager or basketball coach need a playing background in order to achieve success? Of course not!



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