

news of the day, family and golf courses. Back in November Bogey Calhoun mentioned that the deadline for submitting a tall tale to the Burlington Liars Club was approaching. "I'm thinking of sending in a tall tale, a big fat lie."

Tom Morris harrumphed. "Calhoun," he said, "it's the Burlington Liars Club, not the Burlington BS Club. You're not smart enough to create a tall tale."

Bogey enjoyed the moment. One of his joys in life was getting under Tom's skin. This morning was notable because it was so easy.

Calhoun took a sip of hot coffee, sat back in his chair and said, "You are all Wisconsin boys and yet I can tell you don't know anything about the Liars Club. It's history, men. Let me give you a lesson."

Steady Eddie Middleton rolled his eyes. Tom put his face in his hands, indicating what he thought. Scottie Fennimore merely smiled.

"The Burlington Liars Club started way back in 1929," Calhoun began, "and every year since they have had an annual contest to pick the best lie of the year. The reason they exist is to preserve the lie as an enjoyable expression of exaggeration. Really, if we don't

have any lying in America, think of the fun we'd miss out on." Bogey smiled and continued.

"I mean, if you think about it, Slick Willie Clinton would be a natural as president of the Liars Club. He's better suited for that presidency than the one he now holds. And the man is shameless in his lying!"

Tom Morris perked up. He couldn't stand Clinton. "The only problem with Clinton taking part in this Liars Club is that it would be matching a professional against rank amateurs!"

The guys laughed. None of us liked the pathetic pathological liar who occupied the White House.

Bogey went on. "Over the years the Liars Club has honored some whoppers. A few of the winners are engraved on bronze plaques that are mounted on building fronts in downtown Burlington. I like the one about the time it rained so hard that the water was backed up against the barbed wire fence!"

"And the one that told of the Texas summer that was so hot they had to spray the catfish for ticks and the trees were leaning toward the dogs!"

Bogey had his audience's attention now. He motioned Mom for refills of coffee. He was on a roll and not about to give up center stage; he kept on talking.

"Another good one is the one told by the winner in 1937 who claimed his wife was so lazy that she fed the chickens popcorn so that the eggs flipped themselves over when she fried them."

"And then there was the tale that the cows were so skinny in drought stricken North Dakota that two of them could be branded at the same time using carbon paper!"

We were enjoying Calhoun's entertainment. Even Tom was laughing.

It was Steady Eddie who wondered aloud "if any of the winners involved golf courses?"

Calhoun paused, his face turned serious, and then he broke out in a broad smile.

"Eddie, you've given me an idea. We should start the Golf Turf Division of the Burlington Liars Club. Only Wisconsin golf course superintendents would be eligible to enter and we could serve as contest judges!"

"You are dumber than I thought, Calhoun," Tom said. "Nobody will bite on that proposition, especially if they think a major gasbag like yourself might enter the contest."

But the other guys like the idea. Scott wondered if there was time to get notice of the contest in *The Grass Roots*. I said there was.

So, on that cold December morning our own Liars Club was formed. Calhoun was elected president and we declared that anyone who showed up for coffee on the morning of the judging was an official judge. Since we had no dues we didn't need a treasurer. Tom Morris suggested *The Grass Roots* editor serve as secretary

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with the responsibility of printing the winner's tall tale, regardless of how lousy it might be. We were set.

With spring now around the corner and the deadline past, we convened to review the lies that had been submitted and to declare a winner from among them. There were actually more than I had anticipated.

Calhoun called the meeting to order. "The secretary will call the roll."

All I did was look around and repeat the names of the superintendents sitting around the table.

"All present and accounted for," Calhoun boomed.

He then took the sheaf of letters and began reading them to us. Here they are, lies from the first contest:

- *Our greens are so slick that the players are unable to walk on them for fear of falling. They crawl to their ball, carefully stand to putt, and crawl off.*

"Not bad!" The guys were laughing.

"Next one," Calhoun said.

- *I was so successful in managing our golf course through the ravages of heat, humidity and disease last summer with my superb ability in turfgrass triage that I was awarded the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize for Medicine.*

And,

- *The average age of the members at our club is so old that they are deceased!*

"I can relate to that," Tom Morris said. "Keep going."

- *There were so many earthworms on our course last summer that they moved the 5th fairway to the east by about 75 yards.*

"More on greens," Calhoun said as he went on.

- *Our greens are so fast we have to issue players a special golf ball with a cover that can withstand the heat build-up resulting from the high speed of the ball.*

- *The greens on my course are so slick that our mowers are fitted with ice skate blades.*

- *Our greens are so slick that the Kohl Center is considering grassing their rink with the same turf for UW-Madison hockey games. Instead of a Zamboni they'd use mowers and rollers!*

All of us were really enjoying the applications for the tallest golf course tale. It was all made better by Calhoun's theatrics. "We aren't done yet," he said.

- *The turf on our golf course is so specific to Wisconsin that we fertilize with cheese curds and brats, and we water with beer. It works well because the crew snacks on the leftovers.*

- *Our golf club is so exclusive that our used range balls are sold in all the other private golf course pro shops in Wisconsin as their top line golf ball.*

- *The turf on our golf course is so well rooted*

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(due, of course, to my excellent management) that we get phone calls from China complaining that our roots are competing with theirs for nutrients and water.

- *Our greens are so slick that after each mowing we have to spread sand for traction.*

- *The hills on our golf course are so severe that we issue mountain climbing equipment to players. Banks are cut with goats.*

- *Our club is so exclusive that we open on July 4th and close on Labor Day.*

- *The soil on our golf course is so fertile that when I aerify I harvest the cores and sell them at a premium price to other golf courses in Wisconsin for fertilizer.*

"Finally," Bogey said, "the last one!"

- *I am so respected world wide for my intellect and experience as a golf course superintendent that the UW-Madison awarded me an honorary PhD. You may now call me DR. Bogey Calhoun!*

Boos and catcalls rained down on Calhoun's head. "PhD for you really does mean 'piled higher and deeper'," Tom Morris cried.

"You are ineligible!" Steady Eddie insisted.

The rest of us laughed and then got to the business of declaring a winner of the golf course lie of the year award. More coffee and pie made the job easier, and in the end the greens that wouldn't let players walk on them won out over the rest.

"So, Bogey," Tom asked, "who submitted the winning entry?"

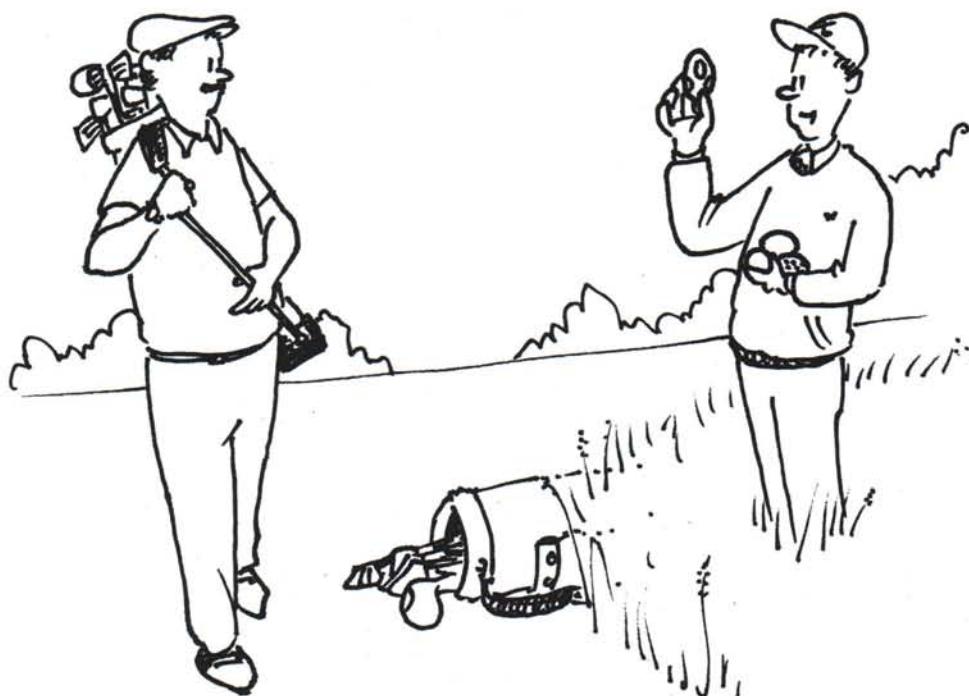
Bogey smiled sheepishly. "I did. In fact, I submitted all the entries, guys. I hadn't received any lies, so this past week I wrote up all of them. I guess that makes me the winner!"

Hoots and hollers, lots of compliments, and praise for superb lying made the day for Bogey. "Next year, we will start earlier, I'll try to generate some interest and maybe we will get at least a few applicants."

"Well," Tom started, "we can try. But the rest of the guys in Wisconsin will know there is little hope of surpassing you when it comes to lies and bull feathers. But not many are better sports, either. I'll give you credit for that, Calhoun."

And then we all decided that maybe we should leave the exaggerations and puffery to the players and the golf pros and stick to growing better grass.

After all, that's what we are best at! ♣



Steven Sawicki '85

I HAVEN'T FOUND MY TITELIST YET, BUT I DID FIND A GREEN ONE, A PURPLE ONE, A BLUE ONE AND THIS NICE YELLOW ONE WITH RED DOTS.

USGA

So Far, So Good

By Bob Vavrek, Agronomist, North-Central Region

Let's be optimistic. The long spell of dry weather this past fall had many superintendents second-guessing themselves about the optimal time to winterize irrigation systems. In fact, irrigation systems at a good number of courses were blown out twice - once in November and again in December.

Dry fall weather was just what the doctor ordered for late fall construction projects - right up to the point where the renovated playing surfaces required seed or sod. It then became a challenge and, sometimes, a losing proposition to keep seedlings or sod alive without the assistance of consistent late-season rainfall. It was no surprise to find that many of these projects have been dormant seeded in hopes of more favorable weather for turf establishment come spring.

The dry fall weather likely encouraged more blue-

grass and bentgrass than *Poa annua* to fill into the voids in the playing surfaces left behind when knotweed, crabgrass, and other annual weeds died back after a few hard frosts. The normally cool, wet conditions during October/November generally produce a flush of *Poa annua* germination and establishment into thin and bare areas, especially at older courses where a considerable amount of *Poa annua* seed is already present in the soil.

The superintendents I talked to during January expressed very little concern over winterkill. They believe the turf had ample time to harden off before the cold weather arrived. Only isolated cases of consistent ice cover on greens or fairways have been reported. The absence of severe freeze/thaw events, so far this winter, provides even more reason to be optimistic about the



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coming season. In fact, the only concern expressed with any regularity is whether or not the efficacy of snow mold fungicides were affected by the relatively long period of mild weather that occurred late last fall.

We are not out of the woods yet with respect to winter injury. Keep in mind that many of the most severe winterkill events to *Poa annua* and perennial ryegrass playing surfaces are associated with an early spring freeze/thaw event. A few mild days during late winter or early spring can cause susceptible turf to break dormancy prematurely. Melting snow or rain can pool in low pockets on greens and fairways. Subsurface frost inhibits the percolation of excess water through the soil profile—even through sandy soils and sand-based greens. When this combination of weather events occurs, the table is set for classic crown hydration injury.

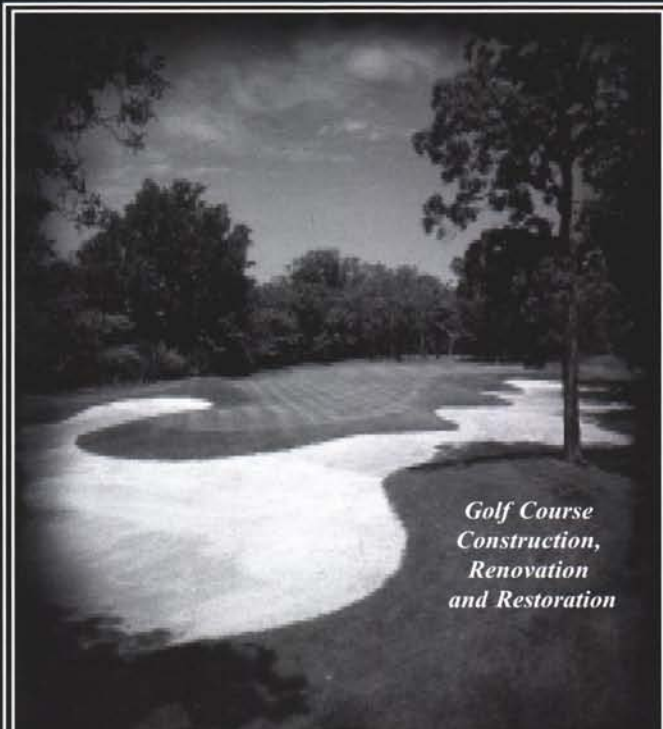
The missing ingredient is a rapid drop in temperature to well below freezing. How low must the temperature drop before injury occurs? That depends on the condition of the turf (dormant, semi-dormant, or actively growing), the species of turf, and other factors.

Many courses remove most of the ice and snow from the greens during early spring to help reduce the severity of winterkill associated with repeated freeze/thaw

events. Snow accumulations on the surrounds can create a dam that impedes the free movement of water off the putting surface. Consequently, snow removal from key areas on the surrounds can be just as important as removing snow/ice from the greens. Darkening agents, such as Milorganite, are still an effective way to accelerate ice removal.

As for next winter, the hot topic regarding the use of covers on greens to prevent winter injury will likely be a waterproof fabric. In theory, the waterproof cover provides a barrier that prevents the crown tissue from absorbing excess water during a midwinter thaw. The trick is preventing water from moving beneath the cover and pooling under the fabric on “punchbowl” greens. A greenhouse effect occurs under breathable fabric covers during open winters and the effect would only be intensified under a waterproof material. Reflective fabrics are being evaluated for their ability to prevent the covered turf from breaking dormancy. If you think the wind wreaks havoc with a breathable cover, just try to keep a waterproof fabric firmly secured to a green. The bottom line is that covers never have, and probably never will be the panacea for all forms of winter injury.

In the meantime, let's hope for the best during the remainder of the winter—so far, so good. ♣




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Even The Weather Was Perfect This Year

By Tom Schwab, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Wisconsin Turfgrass and Greenscape EXPO has become the premier green industry educational conference in the Midwest. That is, if the weather cooperates and you can get to the meeting. Every year EXPO week seems to be plagued with the coldest weather of the season coupled with several inches of new snow. A big change occurred in 2000. The roads were clean and the weather was sunny and mild. Attendees were pleased to finally have nice weather for EXPO. The other talk from attendees centered on how valuable the education was.

There were thirty presentations in three different categories offered over the two-day event. Additionally, an opening session featured the University of Wisconsin-Madison turfgrass research team who presented

findings from last season's investigations. Last but not least, the commercial members of the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association offered a trade show that was second-to-none. Every product, service, or piece of equipment that can be used in turf management was on display and those exhibitors had tons more information to share with attendees.

Attendance topped all of the previous sixteen winter EXPOs sponsored by the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association (WTA). There were 405 attendees, 140 salespeople, and numerous volunteers, speakers and students. The good weather may have been responsible for the record attendance, or maybe it was due to the hard work of the EXPO planning committee. Chairperson Chris Wendorf along with Paul Huggett,

John Stier, Jeff Gregos, Rich Riggs, Chris Williamson, Wayne Kussow, myself, and especially Audra Anderson put untold hours into the success of the show. They are always striving to improve on the success of the previous year's EXPO, so if you have suggestions in particular for future speakers give one of them a call.

Several associations conducted annual meetings during EXPO to keep members abreast of their association's business. The Wisconsin Turfgrass Association, Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association, and Wisconsin Sod Producers each had many members attending EXPO, thus it was a natural to hold annual meetings. There were new board members appointed, financial statements dispersed, meeting sites discussed, research ideas mentioned, and future directions explored at these annual meetings. Each association is fortunate to have dedicated members give constructive suggestions, lend a hand with association business, and help out on their boards of directors.

One presentation at Opening Session crossed the boundaries of all turf professions. Golf course superintendent Jerry Kershasky talked about a new WTA initiative to support turfgrass research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This summer he is starting a pilot program, which will place donation boxes and turf research pamphlets at a select number of golf courses, garden centers, and sports fields. The pamphlets will describe to end-user the importance of turf research in keeping Wisconsin's turf areas beautiful, functional, and environmentally sound.

Another function at Opening Session is the awarding of scholar-

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