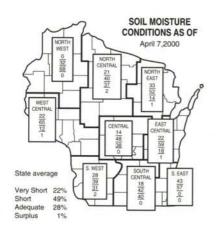
The Big Push Has Started

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

Like spring almost always is, spring 2000 in Wisconsin has been capricious and undependable. From the early opening dates in the first week of March with 70 degrees F. temperatures to the blizzard on April 7, Wisconsin golf course superintendents were operating by fits and starts. There would be 50 players one day and two the next, numbers dictated solely by the weather. Not until mid- to late April did golf really unwind.

And like superintendents who were operating with certain apprehension, players headed onto courses longingly but without their midseason confidence. They have stiff muscles, not used since December for golf unless it was for a Florida or Arizona vacation. But they were a happy lot, at our course anyway, despite brownish turf, leafless trees, harsh winds and highcut greens. Like us, golf players are anxious for the warmer, sweeter days of May and June.

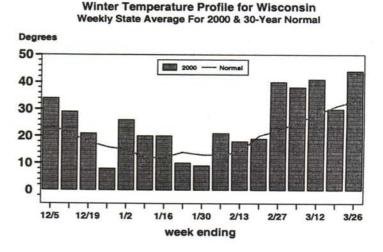
You must always look for the silver lining, and the unusually dry weather of March and the first half of April was a great time for any



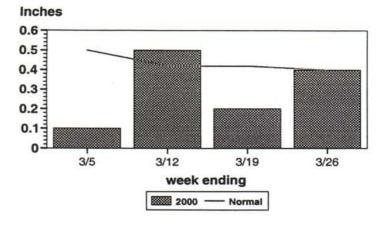
construction projects. We used the time for new tee construction on the fourth hole and some utility work. And the dry weather catalyzed irrigation system start-ups that were a month or six weeks earlier than "normal", whatever that is anymore. Stats from the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service tell the story of dry soils all across Wisconsin.

This might also be the earliest I

have ever been aggravated by the TV meteorologists. Not only have forecasts been off the accuracy mark by a country mile, but they already have been directing their irritating chatter to the spectator sport crowd, commuters and even golfers. Will they ever realize that agriculturalists like us NEED rain once in awhile, even if it slightly inconveniences some of the aforementioned? Golf courses, lawns and



March Precipitation for Wisconsin Weekly State Average For 2000 & 30-Year Normal



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THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

farm fields do well with an occasional shower! So we are still waiting for some April showers to get us off to a good start for summer.

In no time at all, usually sometime in May, we will be overwhelmed with grass, grass, grass. And the powerful cosmetic effect mowing has on golf courses will

remind us, again, of why we like this business.

Despite lousy forecasts, drought and a labor shortage!

Cubby O'Brien should be flattered by the letter I received from Trygve Ekern back in March. He is



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Mr. Monroe S. Miller Editor, THE GRASS ROOTS Blackhawk Country Club P.O. Box 5129 Madison, WI 53705

Dear Mr. Miller,

I would like to take a minute to correct the last issue's "Poa trivia" section. The question from the previous issue read, "When was the first metal wood introduced and by which company?"

While Taylor Made led the way in modern metal wood design, the concept of "metal" woods is not very recent. The earliest metal wood was invented and patented by Englishman William Mills in 1896. Mr. Mills' aluminum head with a wood core was instrumental in the formation and success of The Standard Golf Company as an international supplier of golf clubs. While the introduction of Taylor Made's wood in 1979 was significant in the evolution of modern-day metal woods, it was by no means the first metal wood invented. Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this.

Sincerely,

Trygve R. Ekern

Assistant Golf Course Superintendent

Bristlecone Pines Golf Club

Cubby stands corrected. And I promise I won't call you Mr. Ekern if you don't call me Mr. Miller!

A little credit is in order here. I mentioned Badger Creeping Red Fescue in the cover introduction. In case you didn't know, there really is a Badger Creeping Red Fescue available for purchase.

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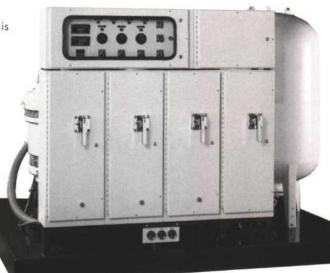
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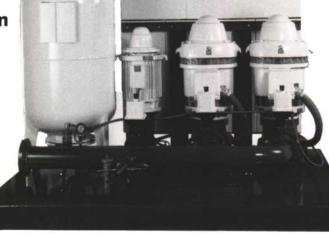
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THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

all creeping red fescues evaluated in the National Fine Leaf Fescue Trials on overall performance, and it ranked #2 of all fine leaf fescues evaluated in the same trials on overall performance.

Badger offers excellent turf density throughout the entire season and has outstanding resistance to dollar spot, brown patch, red thread and leaf spot. It ranked in the top four in the aforementioned trials for genetic color (dark green).

It is a Scotts product, but it is available from a lot of different distributors. Clearly, it is a winner variety, and it has an entirely appropriate name, from another winner - the Badgers. And the name came from the fertile imagination of a proud Badger alum whom we all know - Wayne Horman!

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will spray various areas of Wisconsin - 85,000 acres - for gypsy moths again this year, probably sometime in May. Wisconsin was recently awarded a \$2 million grant to fight the moth, money from the U.S. Forest Service. Their choice of insecticide is B. t. k.

We witnessed the application from our course last season. It is an aerial application, with the plane flying just above treetops early in the morning.

Naturally, some complain. But there were no reports of anyone exceedingly sick from the B.t. It can cause minor skin and eye irritation for some, a fair risk for the alternative - millions and millions of gypsy moths eating and stripping every leaf on every tree in your yard.

There are some big changes underway for the first Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium of the new century. Scheduled for November 14 and 15, it will convene at the Sheraton Brookfield.

The subject couldn't be more timely - sand bunkers.

The new format gets at, I presume, keeping an audience on the second day. It will open with an afternoon session on the 14th and offer a full day on the 15th. A workshop is going to be offered on Tuesday morning for a separate fee and on an unrelated topic. Wednesday morning will feature a breakfast buffet and a special speaker. The remnant from the previous format will be the WGCSA election on Tuesday afternoon.

I realize nothing is firm, but speakers under consideration rate top notch. And the change should really help the Wednesday attendance problem. The changes, if the committee can get the schedule set, will get my approval and applause.

Over the course of the next couple of issues, you will get to read some thoughts about the GCSAA PDI that comes for regular members, both from our chapter and from other chapters. They are refreshing pieces, especially since they don't take the GCSAA line. I still laugh over the "member driven" reference they use. In the broad sense, it simply is not true. And when someone - anyone - uses that tact to begin to sell something, they lose a lot of people right out of the chute, even if the idea has merit. It reminds me of Nixon and Clinton who never learned that the cover-up is usually more damaging than the crime.

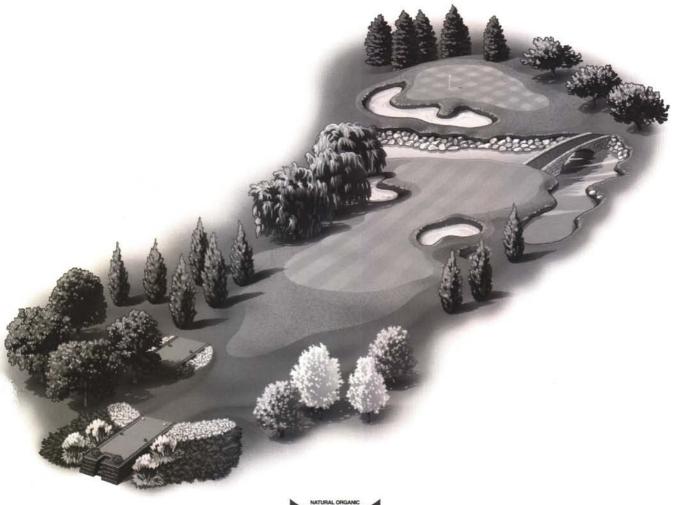
It is important to remain openminded on this issue. That, however, is impossible when all you read is the company line. So we are offering thoughts differing from the GCSAA pitch for your edification.

Soon these oddball days of late April will give way to the plant exuberance of May - flowering crabapple trees, lilacs, bright green grass, dogwood, tulips, bluebells and lots more. The unsettled weather will settle into more predictable patterns (I hope), we will have temperatures in the 70s and gardeners will be out in full force. Farmers' markets will be underway, the winds will die down and our golf courses will be wonderful. May and June are a great time of the year to be a golf course superintendent in Wisconsin, Don't miss them!



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These Guys Have Fun Watching Grass Grow Turf specialists have helped golf from the ground up



By Gary D'Amato, Golf Beat Reporter, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on April 19. 2000. Wisconsin Turfarass Association director Jerry Kershasky invited a number of golf writers from daily papers around Wisconsin to the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility for a tour and a visit with Noer Facility staff and UW - Madison faculty. The afternoon of that day was reserved for a round of golf, courtesy of Tom Harrison and Maple Bluff Country Club. The feature should have been call From Across The State for this issue! Gary's well written story will help a lot to get the word about the Noer Facility and its need for support out to the golfing public. For that, we say "thank you."

Verona - If you play golf, you spend hours walking on it, taking divots from it repairing ball marks in it and, on those occasions when you can't hole a putt, cursing it.

But you probably never think about it.

Turfgrass, the golf course's skin, gets no respect.

"Grass is like the Rodney Dangerfield of the plant world," said Terry Kurth, president of Badgerland Irrigation and an honorary director of the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Educational Facility.

"Everybody loves a tree. Nobody thinks about the turf."

Spend a few hours with the research team at the O.J. Noer Facility, however, and you'll never look at a golf course the same way again.

These guys are passionate about grass. They can talk about root sys-

tems, pythium blight and the exaggerated dangers of pesticide run-off for hours on end. Play a round of golf with them at Maple Bluff Country Club, and they spend more time examining the *Poa annua* than the pin placements.

Call them grass geeks if you will, but golf wouldn't be the same game without dedicated scientists such as John Stier, Wayne Kussow, Jeff Gregos and Chris Williamson.

The O.J. Noer Facility opened in 1992. The Wisconsin Turfgrass Association raised \$350,000 in funds to build it, then deeded it over to the University of Wisconsin. It was named after Noer, a Wisconsin graduate and non-golfer whose contributions to the sport were enormous.

Noer developed Milorganite, a fertilizer that is processed from sewage and widely used by all segments of the turf industry. He became an internationally respected turfgrass agronomist and in 1985 was inducted into the Wisconsin State Golf Association Hall of Fame.

Noer's spirit lives on at the facility that bears his name.

The Turfgrass Disease Diagnostic Lab, managed by Gregos, provides disease diagnostic information and management recommendations to turfgrass growers.

It's not unusual for a panicked golf course superintendent to remove a diseased turf sample from his course, drive three hours to Verona, hand the sick grass to Gregos and ask, "What the heck is this, and how do I get rid of it?"

Stier, an assistant professor in the UW Department of Horticulture, is experimenting with a strain of supina bluegrass found in the Alps in Germany and Austria. Supina thrives in shade, making it perfect for course tee boxes nestled in trees.

"Supina was found on cattle paths in the Alps," Stier said. "It has high traffic tolerance and high shade tolerance, which gives it excellent potential for golf courses."

The next time you play at University Ridge, which happens to be adjacent to the O.J. Noer Facility, you'll stand on supina bluegrass. Some of the tee boxes have been seeded with it.

Kussow, a professor in the Department of Soil Science, spends most of his time trying to grow bentgrass in less than optimal conditions. He is trying to figure out how to reduce stresses on greens that receive little sunlight or are cut extremely short (for faster Stimpmeter readings).

Williamson, a turfgrass entomologist in the Department of Entomology, has done extensive research targeted at management of black cutworms and white grubs in golf turf.

Hey, somebody's got to figure out how to kill those critters. You wouldn't want a black cutworm poking his little head out of the turf and deflecting your 3-foot putt for birdie, now would you?

We need these guys. Unfortunately, the scientists at the O.J. Noer Facility spend a good deal of their valuable time trying to raise money to keep the facility running and fund their projects.

So if you see a plastic O.J. Noer donation box at your local golf course this summer, drop in a buck or two.

Then stand back and watch it grow. \checkmark

A Springtime Venting

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

There's this thing about spring. Actually...it's a lot of little things. Things like the weather, the opening of the golf course, spring course maintenance, spring course projects, new crew members, and existing crew members!

It's things like the new golf professional, the new golf shop staff, existing bar, restaurant, and shop staff, staff returning, staff leaving for greener pastures, existing staff... who all feel that they totally deserve...sizable (huge) compensation increases!

Or things like the club newsletter, club finances, club priorities vs. course priorities, memberships coming in, members not renewing, and members with their suggestions! What's bothering me? Nothing at all...except a lot of little things.

Hey!! It's been raining for three days now...which is great! These are million dollar rains...April so far has been seemingly full of 'million dollar rains'...which is a sort of rationalization of the fact that we're bringing in absolutely no money at all during these rainy periods!! But that rain is worth about \$1,000,000 per inch of precip...so we should have at least \$3,000,000 extra sitting in the bank, right?

Wouldn't it be nice if there was some monetary value attached to April cold or wind? I can just imagine some guy bitching about the cold and wind in April...and some other guy scolding him..."Hey fella, these are million dollar winds...and those raw, blustery days are really, really good for the course!"

And hey, are we raking in the cash this month, or what? People down here in ChicagoLand are so crazy that they'll consistently golf in any kind of weather. Rain, cold, windy as hell...it just doesn't matter! Our course is full each and every day! And to top it all off...no special spring pricing needed to entice golfers! People are so willing to pay full price that there's no need to spend any money whatsoever on marketing or advertising!

As you can see...all of these little things combine into one big thing...leaving a guy no other option than to vent a little...steam and frustration...and go on a rant! I've actually learned this technique to the point of perfection over the years...as have most veteran superintendents.

Any veteran superintendent can clearly see that it's a subconscious college conspiracy thing...implanted into the brain of even the sharpest of young turfgrass minds...the unknown, deeply implanted ability to tolerate authority without question and have nothing but total enthusiasm for the turfgrass profession upon graduation. As these turfies go out into the real world, however, strong forces begin to work against their minds...slowly eroding their will to hold their true feelings in check... resulting in a middle aged venting and ranting that can sometimes result in total career and family destruction!!

I fear that I may be embarking upon that path...just the other day I barked back at a foursome of senior know-it-alls (retired farmers) that "no...these fairways are not Common Redtop...it is called Creeping Bentgrass!!! Penncross Creeping Bentgrass!!!!"

I then stalked away muttering to myself.

Actually any superintendent should know how to rant. Trying to juggle all of the facets of our daily management leads to stress...which needs to be vented off somehow.

The guys who are seemingly always cool and logical are undoubtedly very good at finding an obscure little corner of the course to retreat into for their venting and ranting.

They go off somewhere...get it all out of their systems...and return for the rest of the day...refreshed and eager to tackle more problems! The experienced people in our turf world make absolutely sure that venting is done in private...sort of a personal thing.

Never let your casual acquaintances, neighbors, friends, adversaries, and especially your members or patrons see you venting....they'll either be highly amused, highly afraid, highly skeptical, or highly critical.

Do not let people see your 'dark side'....do not give in to the 'dark side'...which is all Star Wars talk, right? We should all be experts on 'the force' and 'the dark side'...because everybody reading this has seen and has purchased absolutely all of the Star Wars movies!!! Admit it!! You're all Star Wars junkies...just like my warped, pathetic little family!!!

Over the years everybody mellows...so that the ranting and venting takes on less violent overtones and becomes a sort of verbal/cynical/sarcastic sort of thing.

Here at NCCC (sort of a hip little acronym), we started off the year here with lots of change. Lots of change usually means lots of opportunity for venting. Lots of sudden activity...such as opening a golf course for the season...usually means going from 0 mph to about 200 mph in about 2-3 days. Too much to do-lots of venting!!

People who have been through it all before know what to do and have a good chance of keeping their cool and keep things moving ahead. It is dealing with all of the other, less experienced people that causes even the veterans to freak out mildly.

So, on any given early season day we have the rookies who are really freaking out...the veterans who are freaking out just a little bit, and trying not to show it...and the owners who want to come on out just to make sure that nobody is freaking out!!

There are also those rookie employees who are so lost that they don't even realize that the least they could do is freak out a little bit.

In this situation...freaking out at least shows the veterans and possibly even the owners that they do really care about the great career opportunity that they've been given here! The types that don't freak out at all are quite possibly the ones who have no ambition whatsoever...and are destined to scour the 'Help Wanted' ads in the local newspaper...possibly for their entire lives.

This spring I am determined to control my ranting...at least in public. I am going to enjoy my job, enjoy the golf course, and enjoy the rush of instant daily adrenalin when I realize that ... there's way too much to do!

I am going to pause and relax when my wife calls...and not give into the urge of wanting to violently scream at her..."I've got to go...right now...I do not want to chat...I never like to chat!!!"

This spring I vow to renew all of my golf course acquaintances...and accept everybody as they are...when I'd really like to show a few of my special favorites just how deep our wet well really is!

This year, I will keep my patience intact as I daily observe our ancient greensmowers trekking their way across our large greens...hoping like hell that major disasters can be averted this season.

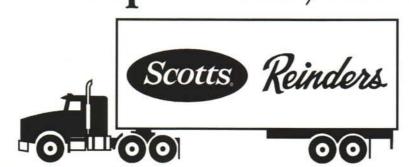
Next year we'll have a pair of new triplexes...or somebody may end up getting bludgeoned into understanding that course equipment is just as important as new clubhouse computers!!!

This year, I will laugh and chuckle when I hear about little, tiny problems in the clubhouse that constantly get magnified and overblown in importance. I will not blow my stack and point out that the reason that the golf course gets rarely mentioned is that it's properly managed!

We will continue to take care of our own problems and make progress in spite of equipment breakdowns, irrigation leaks, etc...it's part of the daily grind. We will make the golf course beautiful and continue to enhance our reputation as a course that's always in good shape! We will not vent too much ... and we will not lose control!

Thanks so much for listening. I feel better already!

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The End of the Scotts Era

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

Two recent events combined to inspire me to sit down and put on sort of an informal record the story of O.M. Scott & Sons in Wisconsin. It also could be considered part of my duties as WGCSA chapter historian and Grass Roots editor.

One event was Gerry Sweda's seminar in Fond du Lac last March. I was visiting with him and reminded him he had been in my golf course shop as a regional sales manager with Scotts over 25 years ago. He was traveling with Jerry O'Donnell at the time. Of course, he said he recalled that visit, but I cannot imagine that he did.

The other event was a Reinders open house in Madison in early spring. Among those in attendance was Tom Wentz. currently the regional manager for Scotts (I guess, or is it Andersons?). I like Tom a lot and in my effort at being a smart alec I asked him, "who is going to sign your paycheck next week?"

Actually, I sympathize with all these guys who have suffered through so many changes with Scotts of late. There is little more discomforting in life than the unknown, and with Scotts the last few years, there have been lots of unknowns.

When most of us think of Scotts, we think of quality. They've made a lot of excellent products over the years. But when they let an occasional dog get into the marketplace, they have always been quick to stand behind their name and correct whatever shortcomings there were and do what was necessary to make the superintendent customer satisfied.

We all think of Scotts and fertilizer. If I am not mistaken, O.M. Scott & Sons actually started out as a seed company. When Bob Erdahl left Blackhawk as our assistant to assume his own course, he gave me a wonderful little used book from 1922, published by O.M. Scott & Son, entitled *The Seeding and Care of Golf Courses*. It is one of my treasures, both because of Bob's kindness and because there will be no more Scotts on the golf course scene, except for seed.

Also, when I think of Scotts, I've observed in my career they were probably the first company to send out a specialized, well-trained and highly educated sales force that focused on a relatively narrow product line. We have had some great ones in Wisconsin.

Dan Mack was the first Scotts salesman I recall, although he never called on me. I met him while I was an undergrad turf student working for Peter Miller at Nakoma in the 1960s. Pete was a Milorganite man - I have written of going to the train yard on West Washington Avenue to help off load Nakoma's Milorganite order from a train boxcar. Mack seemed knowledgeable and got the company rolling in Wisconsin. He suffered a serious car accident that put an end to his career. However, he is still alive, residing in Janesville. Bruce Schweiger recently made contact with him; there may be a story there.

Jerry O'Donnell succeeded Dan Mack for Scotts. Jerry was as qualified as anyone in America for a job like the Scotts tech rep. He was one of the first, if not THE first, to get a turf degree for the UW - Madison. And he followed that with a MS degree under Dr. Jim Love. He worked for Scotts in Marysville briefly after graduation, took the job as golf course superintendent at Nakoma and was vice president of the WGCSA when he returned to the Scotts payroll in 1973 as the tech rep for Wisconsin.

Jerry was like an extension agent - well educated and well experienced and well traveled. Plus, he didn't use any kind of tough sell techniques, mainly because he didn't have to. He stayed in the state until a promotion in 1978. He moved up the Scotts corporate ladder - regional sales manager, national sales manager and eventually a VP. He and his wife Jo are now retired and live on a lake near Reedsburg. I see him at least once a year at our alumni Christmas lunch.

Steve Andre was our Scotts salesman for a brief period, probably measured in months. Steve was a UW -Madison grad and a Madison guy and came back to Wisconsin from the PTI - Proturf Institute. He left Scotts for a job at Oscar Mayer here in Madison.

Then the Dick Evenson era began. He was a favorite

