

sheets of rain pelting down...

There's a tree on this golf course that scares the veteran's wife every time she sees it at night...and a clubhouse that reminds him of the haunted hotel in *The Shining*. There are small golf course trees that suddenly turn into people...and nearby trains that he just knows are going to jump the tracks, make a 90 degree turn, and plow right through the golf course!

One of his favorite sights is a CSX freight train run along its eternal track just south of the golf course. This rail line runs directly through town...and connects Chicago with the Mississippi River and points beyond. All summer long it's an early morning contest between the sound of the westbound freight as it approaches Morris from the east...and the veteran walking out the door...with the quicker vehicle...but the more round-about route. Since the freight train and I are both heading west...we have a little race to see who will reach the crossing first! I always approach the crossing from the south...looking anxiously for the engine appearing through the trees. I almost always win the race...but a thrill of fear does quicken the heartbeat when the headlight of the engine is too close for comfort!

On a recent October morning, the veteran stood in his shop doorway watching the train by moonlight as it approached the crossing and moved into the long grass along both sides of the track. The train was visible only by its running lights and totally audible as its horn announced its intention to either stay to the tracks...or if contested...would decide to jump the tracks and go where ever it pleased...maybe turning directly north and running right over the veteran who kept beating it to the crossing!!!

The aforementioned tree stands guard over a controller cluster on the east edge of the woods near the 12th green. During the day this tree is totally innocent. But...when making the irrigation rounds at night with me...wife Susan says that it's obvious that there's an entrapped soul in the tree with a face twisted in anguish. I always hesitate to turn my back on this tree...fearing that its long limbs will ensnare me on any given night.

Especially nights in October and November...which seem a bit more eerie than warm May and June nights..

On recent September nights I've been spooking myself badly. Our clubhouse normally has a strong outdoor light that illuminates the entire rear area...which has been off or burned out for the past few weeks. So...as I approach in the pickup...I see a totally dark, spooky looking building. My mind imagines that a crowd of ghosts is going to suddenly start forming on the back porch...a party of ghostly golfers enjoying a few drinks...and strange red lights will start

rising from inside the unoccupied clubhouse. I imagine them bursting forth and moving towards me as I try to activate yet another controller! Once again I need to turn my back on them...which I hesitate to do. I quickly do my thing...and escape in the truck. I am hoping that they won't catch up to me as I bolt down Saratoga Road and start coming in around the rear edges of the cab windows! I don't really feel safe until I see the lights of the neighborhood as I approach the city limits.

Why would a veteran guy of 45 years of age still get spooked by scary things in the night? Why not? We may be older and wiser...but we still possess the same mind that we had as a child or as a young adult. Certain things scared me as a boy...like those damned apples trees in *The Wizard of Oz*... Certain other things never bothered me at all.

We all have our triggers for what sets us off...and October seems to be the month in which these triggers are set off more so than any other month of the year! Hope that you and yours all had a Happy Halloween!!!



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The Oldest Golf Course in America

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

The first time I wondered about the location of the country's oldest golf course came with the publication of Gene Haas' book *Playing Through* last year. Thinking and reading about the history of the WSGA and golf in Wisconsin inspired the obvious curiosity and some research into just where our oldest existing golf course was.

The research was easy because it had been done and published by Dr. Geoffrey Cornish in his latest book, *Eighteen Stakes on a Sunday Afternoon*. I'm the proud owner of author's copy 22. Chapter

two has all the historical information on our earliest organized and existing courses in the U.S. and in North America.

The title "oldest existing golf course in North America" goes to Oakhurst Golf Links (1882 - 1884) in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. But it was abandoned for 80 years, until 1994, when it was restored. The first country club in North America was The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts. TCC, however, didn't have a golf course until 1893.

Competitors for the title "first organized golf clubs in the U.S."

are the Dorset Field Club in Dorset, Vermont (1886), Foxburg Country Club in Foxburg, Pennsylvania (1887), and the St. Andrews Golf Club in Yonkers, New York (1888). St. Andrews moved from the original course to a new 18-hole facility in Hastings-on-Hudson in the mid-1890s.

The Foxburg CC places its claim as the oldest golf course in the country on the fact that the golf course has been in continuous use in 1887.

Cheryl and I visited there this past fall, late on a gloomy and cloudy Saturday afternoon. The vil-



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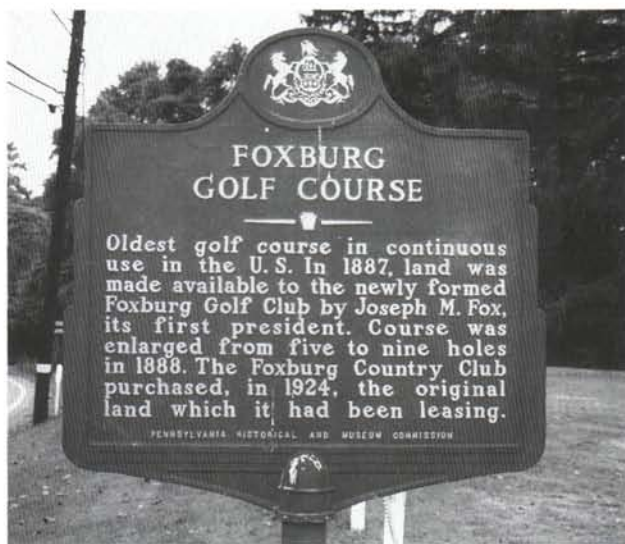
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This signage, located at the course's edge, tells of the club's history.

lage of Foxburg is within a few miles of I-80 in western Pennsylvania. Foxburg and surrounding communities were very prosperous at one time in the late 1800s - they are near the site of the first oil well in the world at Titusville, just north and west of Foxburg. That kind of prosperity is frequently associated with those who played golf during its early years in America.

Joseph Mickle Fox had a summer estate in Foxburg, and he was a member of the Merion Golf Club near Philadelphia (the Merion Cricket Club back then). In 1884 he traveled to England to play in some cricket matches, one of which was played in Edinburgh, Scotland. Since he was so close to St. Andrews, he went there to see golf being played at the St. Andrews Golf Club. He met a bearded old fellow there we are all familiar with - the golf professional, Tom Morris. Old Tom liked Fox, taught him the basics of golf and sold him some golf balls and clubs to take back to Pennsylvania.

Upon his return, Mr. Fox immediately started playing the game on his estate in Foxburg and built an 8-hole golf course. He invited friends in town to play, and so many were intrigued by the game and enjoyed playing it that a more spacious



FCC has one of the coziest clubhouses I've ever been in. The American Golf Hall of Fame and Museum is upstairs.



This photo, through the evergreens and across the course, give a hint of the area's beauty.



The club and the American Golf Hall of Fame buried a time capsule to be opened on the course's 200th anniversary.



The foreground bunker and the backside of the bunker in the background are clues of the course's age.

course had to be built. Fox provided the land to use for free and the Foxburg Country Club was born. These events all happened within three years of his trip to Scotland, and the course has been in continuous play since then - 1887.

The golf course today has the look of a course from years ago. The greens and tees are small. The surrounds are very steep on some features and non-existent on others. It was clear many features were built sparingly with minimum imported materials. Not a lot of soil was moved or used during construction and, fortunately, the club hasn't changed many of those features in more recent times.

The club property sits high above the Allegheny River - it looked to me like a good 300 feet. The golf pro said that years ago there was a practice tee located behind the clubhouse where golfers would hit balls, trying to reach the other side of the river. Complaints from fishermen put an end to the practice tee!

The golf course is charming, and so is the clubhouse. It is small compared to many of the houses seen on golf courses these days. It looks like a log cabin with a wrap around front porch. It has prominent stone chimneys on each end of the house and a brick red roof. The golf shop is attached at the right side of the house. A large

open room with a finished wood floor extends a warm welcome to you when you enter. I could see a small kitchen to the right rear of the living room.

I thought it was coincidental that at the exit from I-80 there was a state highway sign with directions to the American Golf Hall of Fame. It turns out that the AGHF is in the upstairs of the Foxburg Country Club clubhouse! Collected there are some excellent artifacts of golf - photos, old clubs, old golf balls and other such items. Of interest to me

were two clubs made by Old Tom Morris of St. Andrews and four clubs made for him. I wondered if they were originally Joe Fox's... Anyway, it was fun looking through the little museum at the Foxburg CC and talking with the fine staff in the clubhouse.

Foxburg is so atypical of America; usually a gem like this golf course is graded and changed beyond recognition. It was such a thrill to see people on that Saturday afternoon playing golf on a course in use for 115 years. ♣



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Red, Orange and White

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

It seemed like late summer in Wisconsin up through mid-October. And then it snowed. The northern half of our state especially experienced heavy snow - four inches to a foot. We all knew it would melt, but golf course superintendents found it unnerving in light of the low temperature fungi prevention not yet applied and irrigation winterization not even considered.

Although the window of opportunity opened again, winter weather in the midst of autumn can be a powerful catalyst to move up winter preparation plans.

It seemed to me our fall season was all too short. The colors were more subdued and somber with the time of dominant green color to leaf drop shortened. Unless, of course, you were lucky to find that pocket of color on a country road. I visited Andy Kronwall at the beautiful Lake Geneva CC, and arrived and departed along South Shore Drive. It was breathtaking - bright colors on tree trunks and limbs made nearly black from the rain that day. The road could have been in New England.

The 2002 season is nearly over. It will be remembered by many of us as a difficult year. The weather had extremes that were punishing for golf turf. New problems - pests - are emerging and causing troubles on our courses. The economy was very tough on golf - it represents discretionary spending and some who love the game simply couldn't play or play as often this year. Whether daily fee players, club members or outings, business was a challenge in many quarters this year. Some among us were forced into new career situations, rarely a pleasant experience.

Yet in this fast approaching holiday season of Thanksgiving and Christmas, it is good to make an inventory of the good things in our lives, and to balance our disappointments and losses against the pleasure and successes we have had. Thanksgiving was a stroke of genius by our ancestors, giving us a reason to gather as friends and family and commemorate all we have to be thankful for in this world. It gives us a time to enjoy our triumphs and look forward with optimism.

It is the opportunity to gather around that favorite traditional meal of turkey and gravy, mashed potatoes and stuffing, and to be grateful for those who have left us and to also welcome the little ones who have joined us.

Memorial Day, July Fourth and Labor Day all are celebrated at a time when golf course superintendents cannot celebrate them. It doesn't matter that the rest of the country basks in the pleasure of these holidays. But Thanksgiving and Christmas, on the other hand, come at a time when golf courses lie frozen and, hopefully, under snow. Life is more normal now and these two great holidays have more meaning to us than most.

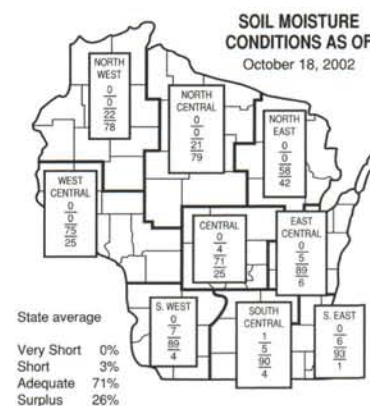
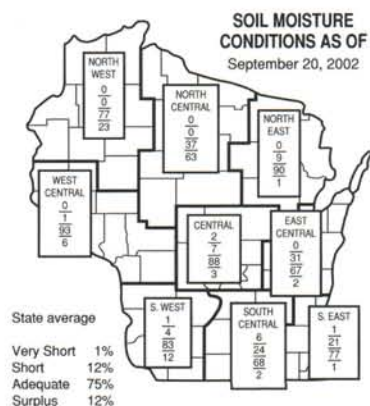
Gathered here are stats about the moisture status in the state of Wisconsin. The June through August period was the driest since the 1930s and drought affected about half the country. Although hard for us in the southern part of the state to believe - we are still 4" - 5" below normal in precipitation - Wisconsin was one of a handful of states wetter than normal this past summer.

Thanks again to the capable

staff at the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service for their good work this past year.

Congratulations to Mike Lee for the work involved in organizing the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association fundraiser at Blackwolf Run in October. And thanks also to the generous people at Kohler Company for giving us the chance to raise money for our Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowships.

That's it. Relax and let this be what it should be - the best time of the year. 🌿



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EXPO 2003 - Something for Everyone

By **Audra Anderson**, Administrative Assistant, Wisconsin Turfgrass Association



EXPO 2003 is scheduled for Monday, January 6th through Wednesday, January 8th, 2003 at the Madison Marriott West. The EXPO Planning Committee has secured speakers from around the United States, as well as from your own University of Wisconsin-Madison, to keep you up to date on current research issues.

Monday, January 6th is scheduled for vendor set-up and workshops for early attendees. There are four workshops to choose from. They run concurrently so you can only attend one. There is a topic for just about everyone. The workshops are listed here.

- Kevin Hensler will be talking about how you can set up an Integrated Turfgrass Management program for your facility. He will explain how setting up an ITM program can benefit you, your facility, and the environment.
- Jeff Postle will be teaching Basic Spanish with an emphasis on golf course and lawn and landscape terminology. Jeff was with us last year and those who took the workshop thought the class was very worthwhile in helping bridge the communication barrier.
- Another popular workshop that will be offered again is Passing the Pesticide Applicator Test. This workshop explains everything that you will need to know to pass the Turf & Ornamental category 3.0 PAT test. Studying the manual before the class is highly recommended. The actual test is given in the afternoon by the Wisconsin

Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection.

- A new workshop that is being offered this year is equipment maintenance. Jack Hensley will teach you basic maintenance that you should be doing on your equipment. He will discuss keeping a maintenance log to help your equipment and you last longer. Answers to specific questions you have about your own equipment will be a main focus.

Tuesday, January 7th, starts off with the Trade Show opening at 8:00 am. The trade show has all the latest equipment, supplies, and advice that you have questions about. You will have time to kick tires as well.

Next for Tuesday morning is the opening session. Our first speaker is Mark Purschwitz of the University of Wisconsin - Madison, Biological Systems Engineering Department. He will talk about issues of safety on the grounds and in the shop including overall guidelines that can help you become a better manager.

Opening session will also have a keynote speaker. He is Richard Kithil, president and CEO of National Lightning Safety Institute in Colorado. Richard has written over 200 articles on lightning safety. He has appeared on Dateline, The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, and other major TV programs to discuss lightning safety. He will give you suggestions to protect your equipment, your self, and your clientele.

A scholarship and awards program happens during lunch on

Tuesday. Turf scholarships, donations, and the Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association's Field of the Year awards are presented at this time. Dr. John Stier will give a brief presentation about the state of the turf industry during the lunch period also.

The education program begins after lunch. The presentations are broken down into three categories — Golf Course, Lawn & Landscape, and Grounds & Sports Turf. You can sit in on any of the presentations whether they're in your field of expertise or not. The roster of speakers is quite impressive including Karl Danneberger, Andy McNitt, A. J. Powell, Andy Hamblin, Mark Sellmann, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison professors Geunhwa Jung, Wayne Kussow, John Stier, and Chris Williamson.

Wednesday, January 8th, begins with more educational presentations and trade show time at 8:00 am. The talks continue until lunchtime. The UW-Madison professors will present their research findings from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Reports from Soils, Horticulture, Entomology, and Plant Pathology will be presented.

EXPO has always been a time to gain valuable turfgrass education, gain information for future purchases, and meet with old and make new friends. This year will be no different so make plans now to attend, January 6 - 8, 2003. It'll be here before you know it! Registration information will be mailed in November. If you have any questions, please contact Audra at 608-845-6536 or ajander2@facstaff.wisc.edu.

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