



As Good As It Gets

By **Dave Van Auken**, Golf Course Superintendent, WGCSA Golf & Arrangements

Although the weather was not the most cooperative, quite a few of you made the trip to beautiful Oconomowoc CC for the June gathering of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association. Our host, Dustin Riley, had the course in immaculate condition for those who ventured out to do battle with the timeless tract in the annoying drizzle. The staff at Oconomowoc CC welcomed us with their gracious hospitality, delicious food and outstanding service. I personally felt both privileged and humbled by the experience. If you weren't humbled by the courtesy and respect that was offered in abundance, you were more than likely humbled by a demanding golf course. Can you say, "Fairway metal on a par 3?"

There, as always, were a few participants who found their way into the awards ceremony by displaying their A-games, Bob and Duane aside. Following is a list of these talented individuals. ♣

First Place Low Gross = Joe Knudtson

2nd Place Low Gross = Ray Shane

Last Place High Gross = Duane Grim

Long Drive = Todd Martin

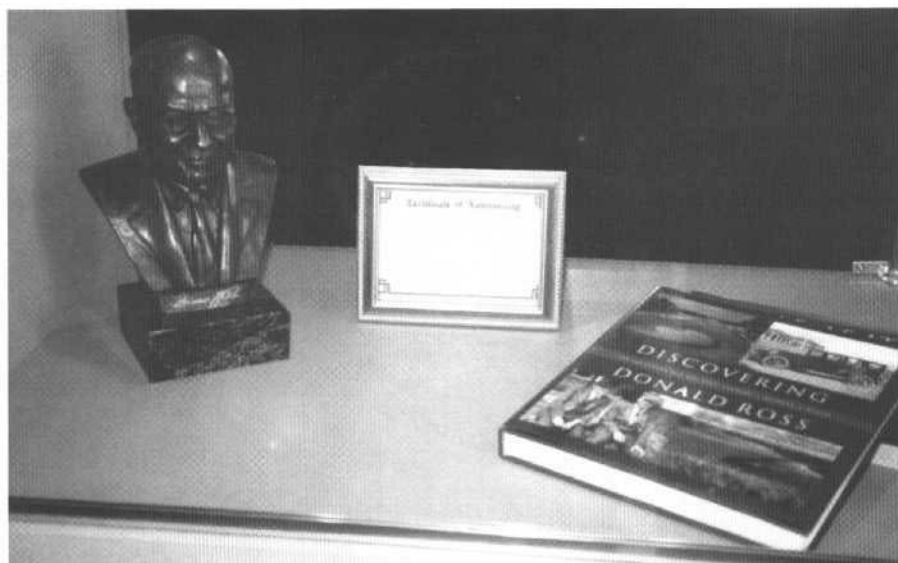
Closest to the Pin = Jeremy Amossen

First Place Low Net = Mike Werth

2nd Place Low Net = Charlie Ciszowski

Last Place High Net = Bob Cross

Longest Putt Made = Mike Judkins



Oconomowoc CC is proud of its connection to Donald Ross.



A new clubhouse welcomed WGCSA members at OCC.



Scott Schaller and host Dustin Riley.

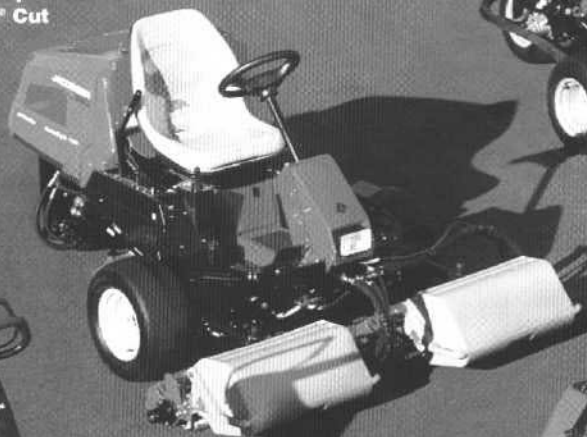
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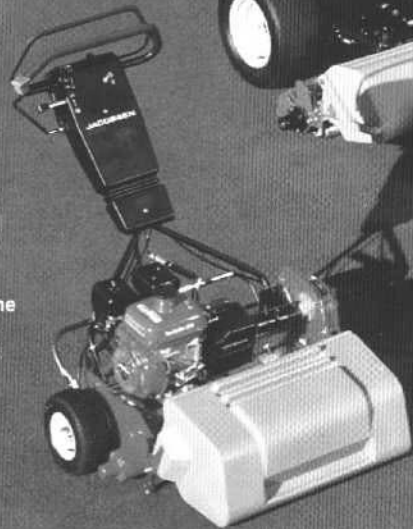
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Summer...What Summer?

By Bob Vavrek, USGA Senior Agronomist, North Central Region

For some superintendents, it has been a quiet peaceful season, with little, if any, heat stress to turf. Temperatures have rarely reached into the upper 80's and then for only a day or two. Irrigation systems have been used so little at several courses visited recently that the grass has almost completely grown over the sprinklers.

On the other hand, this summer has been very difficult if you happened to be unlucky enough to have experienced significant winterkill on the course. Injury to turf from ice and desiccation has been extremely slow to heal over. Damage in fairways was still evident at many courses well into August, despite several attempts to overseed.

It should come as no surprise that recovery was slowest in sites where concentrated cart traffic causes wear and compaction to the turf. Make every effort to divert cart traffic away from winterkill, with ropes and stakes if necessary, until the playing surfaces heal completely. Start this policy in spring and no exceptions for outing, special events, etc.

As we begin to prepare for next winter, keep in mind that the controversial issue of whether or not to cover greens has not been resolved. Every season a few more types of cover materials hit the market with the usual sales pitch...green up sooner/open sooner and increase revenues, improve turf density during the spring, complete protection from desiccation and crown hydration and so on.

Yet year in and year out, some covers work and others don't. Some years nearly every type of cover seems to help and the next year you're better off without covering greens. The bottom line has not changed very much over the years...covers are simply not the panacea for all the types of winter injury that can occur across the northern tier of states. Under certain conditions they can be beneficial and a good investment, under other conditions they do nothing or possibly cause more harm than good. When all is said and done, a moderately heavy application of sand top-dressing applied uniformly over the greens still provides a fairly good level of protection from desiccation during an open winter.

The cool weather this summer was a blessing in many respects. Cold, exceptionally wet weather during spring limited root growth and most courses entered the summer with weak, shallow root systems. Greens scalped down to increase green speed have typically had the weakest root systems. Most courses

visited are routinely mowing greens at or below an 1/8" and you would be hard pressed to find many roots deeper than an inch. Losses of turf could have been severe if the summer had turned out to be hot and dry.

Just because the summer has been mild is no reason to postpone or skip the important core cultivation operations this fall. Coring the greens, tees, and fairways will help stimulate new root growth and remove some of the excess organic matter that accumulates in the upper root zone of the playing surfaces. Keep in mind that cool, wet weather inhibits the microbes responsible for organic matter decay. Core cultivation with hollow tines will remove some of the organic matter that would have normally been removed by natural decay processes. Excess thatch accumulation can really sneak up on you during a wet, cool season. We will learn much more about the problems associated with excessive organic matter accumulation on November 16th and 17th at the 2004 Wisconsin Symposium.

Dollar spot has gone wild at many courses this summer. Superintendents have often commented that fungicide treatment intervals needed to be shortened significantly due to the ideal weather for disease activity. One day you have control and the next day extensive areas of turf are covered with disease.

A fair amount of take-all patch was observed at a number of courses during June. Old bentgrass/*Poa annua* turf in fairways was affected along with tees sodded with bentgrass a few years ago.

Sod webworms damage to greens has been observed on visits from early spring through summer, though the amount feeding injury was rarely severe enough to warrant an insecticide application. Ants, however, have been particularly troublesome on greens, tees and fairways all summer.

Weeds had little trouble competing with slowly growing turf during April and May. Clover has been a persistent problem and once the weather finally warmed up into the 70's and 80's, a considerable amount of crabgrass germinated across bunker banks and other droughty areas of the course.

Despite these concerns, the summer has been exceptionally kind to turfgrass at most courses. Let's hope for similar good fortune through the rest of the season. ♣



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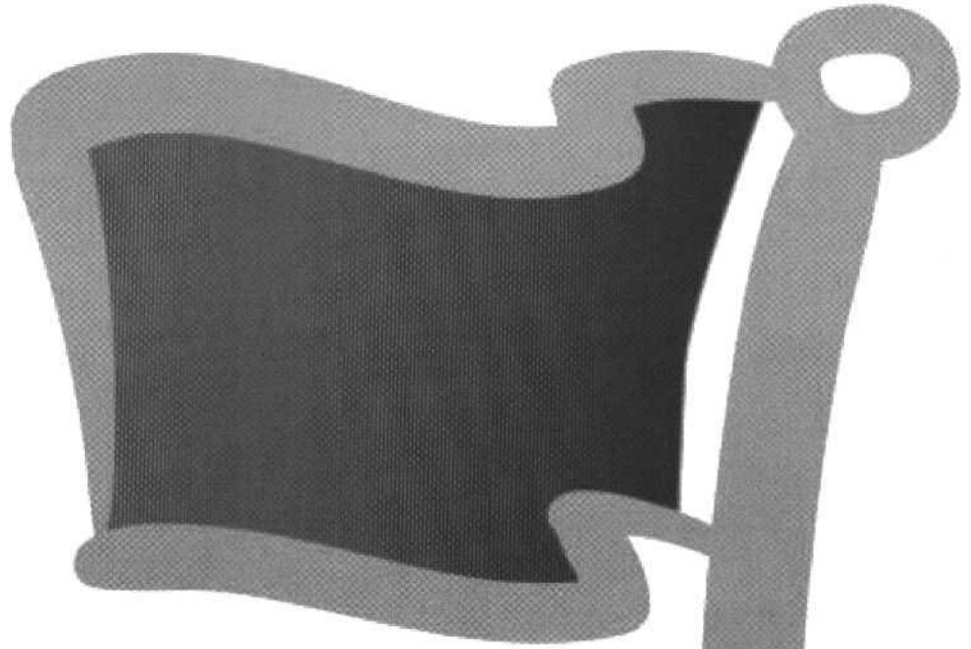
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Augtober

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

The first signs of autumn usually begin in mid-to late August for me. This year, August was actually like October. The outdoor world where I work offers clues impossible to miss - sumac turning from green to red, the wild grapes near the pump station on Lake Mendota are almost all purple, and the Queen Anne's Lace along the railroad tracks next to the shop offers up its wide white flowers.

The days are two hours shorter now, and we see an occasional yellow school bus cross over the Blackhawk bridge. Labor Day, at least for golf course superintendents, signals the onset of autumn, not the autumnal equinox set by the calendar. Shortly after Labor Day we have to start work later because the days are so much shorter, and there is a chill in the morning air. The afternoon sun falls lightly as the golf course crew mows fairways and surrounds and roughs. The grass can still be wet with dew in early afternoon, and soon enough we will worry about cores drying so we can clean up after fairway aeration. Leaf removal will assume more priority than mowing.

Wisconsin is never more beautiful than it is in the fall. And it has arrived again, finally. The best days at work are here.

“Not much of a summer” is a phrase I heard plenty this past couple of months. To players, that means too many golf events were cancelled or too many days were less than fully enjoyable for the game. It means that the hot and humid sunny days they are used to in the summer and love for golf games didn't happen very often

this summer. In other words, we didn't have three months of July like we seem to have most years.

A lot of rain fell this summer. And in our town it was timely and didn't come in flood proportions. A wet summer is a dark summer, and that leads to long periods of gray and gloomy weather. Madison, according to the Wisconsin Climatology Office, had 17 rain days in May, 14 rain days in June, 11 rain days in July, and a dozen in August (which isn't over yet). We haven't had even one 90 degree F day and only a few over 85 degrees F. May, June, July and August all were below normal in temperature; August has been over 5 degrees F. below normal thus far. Moisture status from around the state is here for you to review.

All of a sudden, the global warming discussions have disappeared.

As the old saw goes, “if you couldn't grow grass this summer, you probably should find a different line of work.” Even though the weather was perfect for healthy turf, golf is in a depressed time and we didn't need poor golf weather to make things worse.

We can all hope for a warm and beautiful fall, one with golf courses packed with players and weather that will allow us to get our work done. We can assume our seats in Camp Randall or pull up a chair in front of the television and watch the Badgers rack up those victories in another fun football season.

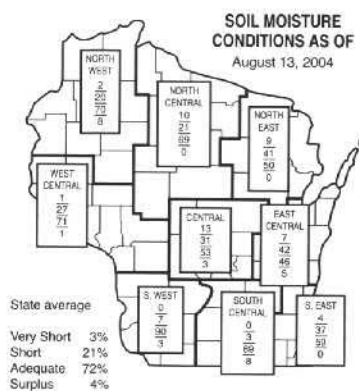
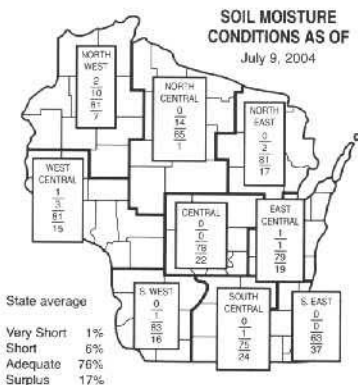
Here is a toast of apple cider to Wisconsin's greatest season.

Not only did the cool temperatures of summer remind one of the upcoming season, early ripening of the foliage of some trees added to the sense of an early autumn.

All over Wisconsin trees were showing fall color about a month earlier than usual. Experts aren't sure why.

We have become used to seeing sugar maples on boulevards and street medians turn color early - it is usually called urban decline. We also know that drought, nutritional deficiencies and diseases can cause trees to turn color prematurely, but those reasons do not seem to apply this year. Face it — this was one of the least stressful summers for plants you will ever see in Wisconsin.

There are some theories trying to explain it through heavy early rains and the very cool summer temperatures.



For me, I will just leave it as one of Mother Nature's mysteries. Golf course superintendents see such mysteries every day. The early color was, if nothing else, a psychological boost and a vivid reminder that my favorite season wasn't far away.

The wet spring that killed so many rounds of golf also killed off tens of millions of gypsy moths, too. The result has been a significant decline in tree defoliation.

The driving wind and rain in May were especially effective. They repeatedly knocked newly hatched caterpillars from trees and shrubs to the ground where they died.

An event like this one breaks the population cycle, and if we are lucky thousands of fewer acres will need to be sprayed next year and some serious money will be saved.

But before you get too excited, remember this: gypsy moths are definitely here in Wisconsin and they are here forever.

No defoliation occurred in Wisconsin again this year even though there were threatening populations in some areas. In addition to the help from the weather, I think we should give considerable credit to WDATCP's spraying program over the past 15 years. It has been extremely effective and helpful.

August was an especially fun month for me, simply because I had some interesting visitors to our shop and golf course. The USGA Green Section had a regional research meeting in town. Jim Snow, national director of the Green Section, and Dr. Kim Erusha, the research director, attended and I was fortunate to spend a bit of time with them. Each is a real gem and being in their company is always a pleasure. Kim and Geunhwa Jung were PhD students at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln together.



Kim Erusha and Jim Snow visited Wisconsin this summer.

Chris Williamson invited Dr. Pat Vittum to visit his earthworm research plots.



Chris Williamson, brought Dr. Pat Vittum from the University of Massachusetts — Amherst out to the course to see his earthworm research. She was a very interesting person to visit with and has made considerable contributions to the field of golf course management.

Golf brings you into contact with so many wonderful people at all levels and in all aspects of the game. It may be one of the best things about a career like we have.

Those of my generation who were students in the UW-Madison turf program undoubtedly took the introductory course in Agronomy taught by Julian M. Sund. I am sad to report that Julian passed away on Monday, August 16th. Pat Sather's wife is a close relative of Julian, and Pat was kind enough to let me know right away.

Julian's life story in many ways was like those of so many in the state. With deep roots in Norwegian heritage, he grew up on a farm near Westby. He attended college at the UW-Madison and stayed on as a faculty member in

the Agronomy Department.

He is best known for figuring out the danger of silage gas that killed so many Wisconsin farmers of his time. The culprit was nitrous oxide, and Julian spent considerable time educating farmers of the danger. He also helped solve the mystery of the spontaneous abortion of many cows in central Wisconsin — nitrates collecting in certain weeds in low, marshland pastures.

J.M. Sund was a positive influence on many students in CALS at the UW-Madison. We meet only a few like him in our lives and they are always missed.

The highlight of 2004 for any of us involved in golf, even remotely, had to have been the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits. It was as close to perfection as one could have hoped for, which clearly was what Mike Lee and Dave Swift and everyone else at the Kohler courses have been working toward for a long time.

Success like that is no accident or lucky break. Their extreme effort put Wisconsin on the map of



Sand bunkers,



Tiger Woods,

Lake Michigan
and...



the 18th hole were
favorite topics of
conversation at
Whistling Straits.

the world of golf. There was so much television press coverage that it seems unnecessary to repeat any of it here. Suffice to say that every Wisconsin golf course superintendent felt a lot of pride that week.



Compliments and high praise are due to Tom Schwab, the UW-Madison turfgrass faculty, the staff at the Noer Facility, and the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association for the simply outstanding Field Day we experienced in late July. The research farm has never looked better, the weather was superb, the Kurth Family Fellowship was introduced, and the chance to kick tires and soak up all kinds of science made it day to remember. If you missed it, you missed a lot. For those there, we won't soon forget it; it was simply terrific.



The autumn season is filled with activities — WGCSA meetings, a couple of fundraisers, and a season wrap up with the Symposium. It is the best time of the year; please enjoy it. ♣

Tom Schwab — a man of many talents — was at the PGA championship with his Irish band. He's quite a fiddler...

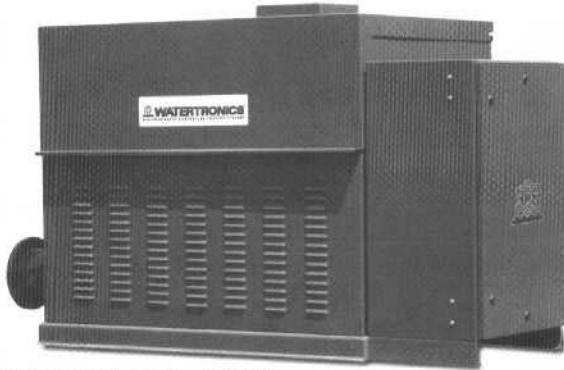


Danny Quast and Wayne Otto took time from the PGA and golf to hear Tom Schwab in concert.



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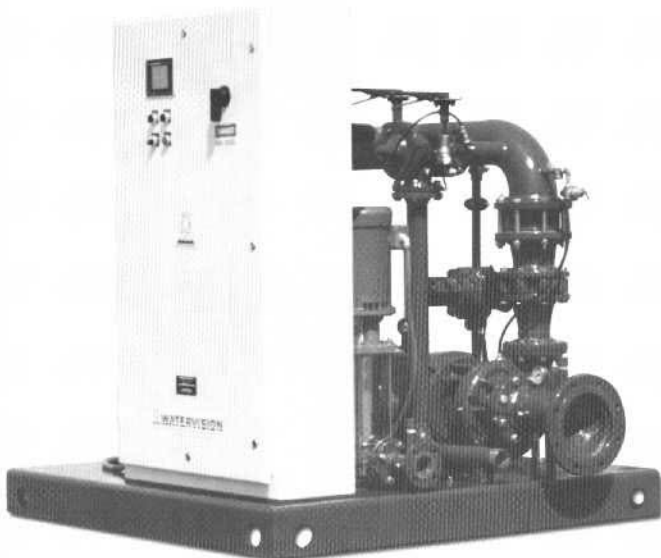
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Field Day 2004 Packed with Highlights

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

The day could not have been any better. The Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Summer Field Day was packed with so many wonderful components that I don't know where to start. There was perfect weather, large attendance, and several special features. Additionally, there were many distinctive guests, a huge trade show and abundant education.

In this year of the rain storm, a short dry period was appreciated at field day time. There was no rain for six days prior to field day, which helped firm the ground so that large equipment could move into the trade show area with minimal damage. The weather was likewise perfect on field day with a clear sky, 80 degree F. temperature, and only a mild breeze. The attendees had a great time, especially the ones who remembered to bring their sunscreen and sun glasses.

Attendance shot up in 2004, with 355 attendees compared to 301 last year. This does not include the research staff or trade show exhibitors. The numbers of trade show sales representatives went up to 81 from 78 last year. This occurred even though the number of companies dropped to 34 from 36 in 2003.

In addition to larger attendance, there were several great special features to field day, including a special visit from Betsy Francoeur, the 57th Wisconsin 'Alice in Dairyland.' In her presentation during opening session, Betsy expressed how important the turf industry is to Wisconsin's economy. She also talked about the benefits turf provides to the environment including pollution filtration, air quality improvement, rainwater absorption, erosion con-



The past and present of the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) - Emeritus Dean of CALS, Dr. Leo Walsh and current Dean of CALS, Dr. Elton Aberle.



Other distinguished guests included Associate Dean of CALS Dr. Dave Hogg, UW-Madison Chancellor Dr. John Wiley, and UW-Madison Department of Horticulture Chairperson Dr. Dennis Stimart.

trol, and greenspace formation.

Other special guests besides Alice in Dairyland included Dr. Elton Aberle, Dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS), and CALS Associate Deans Dr. Margaret Dentine and Dr. David Hogg. Additionally Dr. John Wiley, UW-Madison Chancellor, made a first-time visit to the Noer Facility during this year's field day. Other distinguished guests included Department of Horticulture Chairperson Dr. Dennis Stimart, and Emeritus Dean of CALS Dr. Leo Walsh.

A very important gift was donated to the University turf program during a presentation prior to lunch. Brandon and Amanda Kurth, on behalf of their parents Terry and Kathleen Kurth, presented the third Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship (WDGF) to the University.

In addition to the special presentations there was so much more to field day. The main reasons people come to field day are for the research tour and the trade show. Several attendees, including Chris Brindley, president of the

Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association and Bob Brooker, golf course superintendent at Plum Lake Golf Course, said that this was the most educational Summer Field Day they have ever attended.

Pahl Olson from Wisconsin Turf Equipment said, "This was the best organized and most successful trade show he had ever attended." Everything you could need to manage turfgrass better was shown during the trade show. Please show your appreciation to the field day exhibitors listed below who help sponsor these wonderful events.

It's going to be hard to top this field day. Everything came together, from the weather to the special highlights to great education for 2004. With the precedent set this year, the UW-Madison turf program will continue to show the best there is in turfgrass education for many years to come. ♻️



The Kurth Fellowship was presented at the 2004 Summer Field Day. Pictured from left are Brian Swingle, executive director of the Wisconsin Landscape Federation; Dr. Elton Aberle, Dean of UW-Madison CALS, Amanda Kirth, Brandon Kirth, and Dr. John Stier.

2004 Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Summer Field Day Exhibitors

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
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| Bayer | Olds Seed Solutions |
| Conserv FS | Pendelton Turf Supply |
| Contree Sprayer | ProLawn |
| DHD Tree Products | ProSource One |
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