

Berryman, the Norskedalen Trio, and all the rest. Even the famous UW - Madison's Marching Band was represented on the play list. On this day we walked into Stinky's to the strain of "Ole Olson the Hobo from Norway," one of Calhoun's favorites.

"Bring us a pitcher of Spotted Cow beer, Phoebe," Bogey hollered to her even though she was clear across the restaurant.

She waved and replied, "wait your turn." The tavern business was good this day, as it was most days. We always arrived a little before the noon crowd so we could sit together at a table or in a booth. We ordered - mostly red bratwursts except for Steady Eddie Middleton who loved Stinky's bluegill platter and could be counted on to order it every chance he had.

The topic of the day at the Center for Continuing Education was the tough winter we had and the resulting winter injury. We all agreed the turf was mending, but only after some yeoman efforts.

"Chris Wendorf says they are shipping creeping bentgrass seed into Wisconsin by the semi-truck load," Scottie Fennimore offered as he took a long draught of the cold Spotted Cow. "I know I have bought and sliced in my fair share of it."

"For most of us, getting the course set up for recovery when the warm weather finally arrives has been an "unbudgeted" item," Calhoun said. "In our case we will simply have to do without something else - there aren't going to be any budget add ons. And the bentgrass seed isn't cheap these days."

"Dr. Don White used to say whenever I would hear him speak on the winter turf conference and education tour, 'when given lemons, make lemonade.' That is kind of where I have my mind - the annual bluegrass is thinned or gone, so it presents a great opportunity to get some bentgrass growing. It could only help in future winters that turn out like this one past one. And rest assured, there will be more winters as bad as or worse than the one just finished," Tom Morris said.

Oscar Bahl hadn't said much. Just as he started to talk, Phoebe brought our chow, steaming and fresh from the grill and deep-fryer. We had to relax a little and enjoy our food. About the time Phoebe returned with another pitcher of Spotted Cow, OB picked up where he had left off.

"Boys, the golf season has barely begun and I am tired already. We have jammed a mess of work into our schedule already, working late and on weekends; how is a guy going to feel when August rolls around?"

Everyone nodded in agreement. OB went on. "Here's how bad it is. My wife and I bought a camper last year. We used it a little in the fall, but never ventured very far. I promised her we would take some weekend time this year and relax in some parks around the state.

"With the start to this year, my promises seemed

hollow to Dottie. We were so anxious to get the camper out that last weekend we camped - you are not going to believe this - in my shop yard at Old World CC! I backed the camper into the far corner with the backside facing the shop and the left side of the camper facing the golf course. We grilled out, played cards and cribbage, watched birds and the other things we do when we camp at Lake Wisconsin, Prairie du Chien or over by Lake Michigan!

"It was fun, but still a sad commentary on how busy we can get. Or, maybe it is just a sign of reluctance to be reasonable and sensible and willing to let some work wait until tomorrow."

Bogey leaned back, belched and told OB that camping out in his shop yard was probably an example of why he had been successful for so long.

"That doesn't mean I don't think you've got a loose screw somewhere in your head," Bogey said.

We sat around a few more minutes, finished our Spotted Cow and concluded we deserved to feel sorry for ourselves a little bit, anyway. And then we went back to work to try to nudge Mother Nature back to where we needed her to be. And we knew it wasn't going to be easy. ♣

163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.



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Logic on the Golf Course

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



Logic on the golf course is that process of deciding on best course management practices on a continual basis. It is that ability to make decisions over the course of an hour, a day, a week, a month, or a season...that impact productivity, course playability, and personal attitude as the season wears on...

Logic on the golf course can be short term...as in how to deploy your meager 6-8 man squad on a daily basis to best defend the springtime playing condition of your golf facility.

Logic on the golf course can also be long term...as in deciding on recommendations to the green committee or ownership as to consistent management of their golf course...or writing up a long term improvement plan for the facility.

We all practice this logic everyday. In fact, it's a huge part of our everyday routine. Given the fact that we are guided by club officials or owners...we are all still responsible for making decisions all day, every day.

Our ability to think logically and make good decisions is probably far more important than our raw knowledge of turfgrass science, but as we know a blending of these two skills, and innumerable others, combine to create the skill set of the modern golf course superintendent.

And, for the purposes of this essay, logic tells us that the phrase 'course management' refers to things horticultural and agronomic...not to the new, and almost plagiaristic fad of using our time honored 'golf course management' to refer to some PGA wannabe's ability to negotiate any given round of golf in the fewest possible strokes!

The following logical tidbits are

all true...and come to you only slightly embellished...

Whereon a certain veteran superintendent wanted too desperately to take advantage of a donation of a mountainous supply of choice topsoil from a course side home construction site.

After trying...and failing... to convince ownership of accepting the topsoil and using it all to erase a worn out, ill-placed maintenance path running adjacent to a fairway...our logical hero decided to go ahead with the project anyway.

This old maintenance road, you see, was a mixture of subsoil, asphalt grindings, and potholes...and had been deteriorating badly for some time. The recommendation to repair or eliminate this path is in our long forgotten, long-term course improvement plan.

To the superintendent, logic certainly says that this plan should be taken seriously, and implemented and followed as budget allows. To everybody else, the long-term plan has been practically forgotten.

So, because logic dictated that action be taken or the topsoil opportunity would be lost forever, the veteran decided to ask for forgiveness later instead of permission 'up front'...and then got his butt chewed...and his job threatened...for going against the wishes of ownership! Logic also tells me that verbal communication and convincing skills were lacking...so in the end the veteran sort of forced himself into a bad situation.

In the end, the topsoil project is a big success. Grass is starting to establish...golfers don't have to negotiate the huge cart path scar on the eighth hole...and the mounds surrounding the fairway and green of No. 8 are pristine after years of having this cart path scar along their spines. Golfers are commenting positively about the change...and all will be well.

Logic this season is also keeps telling me...the educated, literate golf course veteran...that open, links type courses should stay that way. Peppering this huge, expansive, public golf course with trees would

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not be in our best interest. Manicuring this monster is also not logically in our best interest. Too many acres and too much land in extremely remote locations...way out of play...and so, logically, way down on the maintenance priority list.

Yet, survey after survey returned in May 2005 from our members expressed their desire for more trees...more trees...more trees....and less 'wild grass'/prairie grass/unmowed, unkempt grass.

Better yet, we sent out a different version of this survey to the homeowners who live around the course. Their number one concern? The unkempt, wild look of the prairie grasses bordering the rear boundary of many of their lots and how it affects their property values.

Unfortunately for them, logic

has told me and our ownership (for about 10 years now) that;

because we operate on a budget, and

because these areas are out of play, and best yet,

because the homeowners here do not own the golf course, we logically cannot and do not listen to them. They must accept the golf course for what it is...an open, prairie grassed, links style course with many low and un-maintained areas!

In fact, almost every homeowner concern from the survey had to do with making the golf course more manicured...to again enhance their property values! It was all so logical, so transparent, and so humorous.

Logic also tells me that future

complaints and homeowner concerns will center chiefly on their version of what living on a golf course is all about. If we simply gave them;

24/7 access,

their own golf cars,

fishing rights,

walking the dog rights,

trespassing anytime rights,

jogging rights,

F&B daily discounts.

We think that they might then be satisfied. Why we chuckle is that their collective attitude is that they have a due and a right to these abovementioned items...simply because they bought a lot and built a home on our golf course! We do not care that they have an extremely

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expensive investment of a home. We think that civilians who build homes on golf courses should do more research before committing.

Logic again simply says...own the course and then make the rules. For our ownership, this golf course is not a very profitable investment so far. At the very least, letting them make their own rules and set their own policies is their undeniable right. Expecting us to even consider any of those homeowner requests is very illogical.

What these homeowners also do not seem to understand is that there is no guarantee that this golf course remains a golf course. This land could someday be sold off to a developer for the purpose of transforming it into a subdivision! Petty minded homeowners need to give just a bit of credit to an elderly couple who are owning and operating this golf course, year after year, with more attached stress than they really need to be feeling on an almost daily basis. Obviously, these homeowners do not think logically.

If you give it a chance to ferment in your mind, golf course

logic can run in many directions.

Logic daily reminds me that many of my hopes and dreams for this golf course may never be realized. I really want to define this place as a links type course. I really want to expand our prairie grass acres, and enhance our 'no mow' areas. I really want the green light on building blue tees on about 4-5 of our shorter par 4 holes that are just begging for a simple extended length tee. We may still have a good chance to do all of that.

Yet, it doesn't even bother me so much anymore that we probably won't be able to really showcase this place like it deserves. Too many money constraints, too little time

for extras. Everybody in golf these days sings this same blue tune.

Logic tells me that, in the end, we will be remembered positively, by our members and these fickle homeowners simply because of our desire to constantly maintain and improve our property.

Logic also tells me that things around here in the future may change, and most of these members and homeowners may not like the changes.

We hope that their own form of logical thinking kicks in when remembering the group that has owned and managed this golf course for the past fifteen years. ♣

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Turf Death Isn't Just For Golf Courses

HOW DIFFERENT TURFGRASSES SURVIVED THE WINTER AT THE O.J. NOER FACILITY



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

Turfgrass death from the winter of 2004/2005 is by now well documented at Wisconsin's golf courses. Reports of the extensive damage have been told in the popular press, trade magazines, professional gatherings, and on Noernet. The best description of what exactly happened to cause the turf death was written by Jerry Kershasky, from Westmoor Country Club, in the Spring, 2005 issue of the WTA newsletter.

His article has several pictures of turf death that occurred at the O.J. Noer Facility. Many sod farms also had extensive damage from this winter. Golf courses were not the only turf areas hard hit, but the message is pretty much the same.

In his article, Jerry quoted UW-Madison professor John Stier, who stated the damage most likely occurred when temperatures were in the mid-50s and large amounts of rain fell in early January. The rain was followed by below zero temperatures within 24 hours. This caused ice crystals to form in and around the crowns of susceptible plants, which ruptured cells and caused them to die. Dr. Stier also said the death could have occurred from the buildup of toxic gases or from the lack of oxygen that occurred under ice formed from that January weather. He believed the death occurred more from ice crystals formation in and around plant cells, than from toxic gases or lack of oxygen under the ice sheets.

The article stated that various species and biotypes within species survived differently. The Noer Facility definitely experienced this. Kentucky bluegrass and bentgrass survived just fine,

even after the rain and rapid temperature drop in January and under the resulting thick ice formation. Conversely the facility experienced death of tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and some biotypes of *Poa annua* that were covered with ice.

Bob Vavrek, from the USGA Green Section, was also quoted in Jerry's article. He made the point that both surface and subsurface drainage were critical factors in determining turf damage. This may be why all our fine fescue plots survived well under this



I remember the infamous day when all the ice formed. Doctoral student Kurt Stienke was bailing water from his runoff study, of over 1 inch of rain that fell on January 12th. Temperature dropped to -1F on the 14th.



This is what the facility looked like on January 15th.



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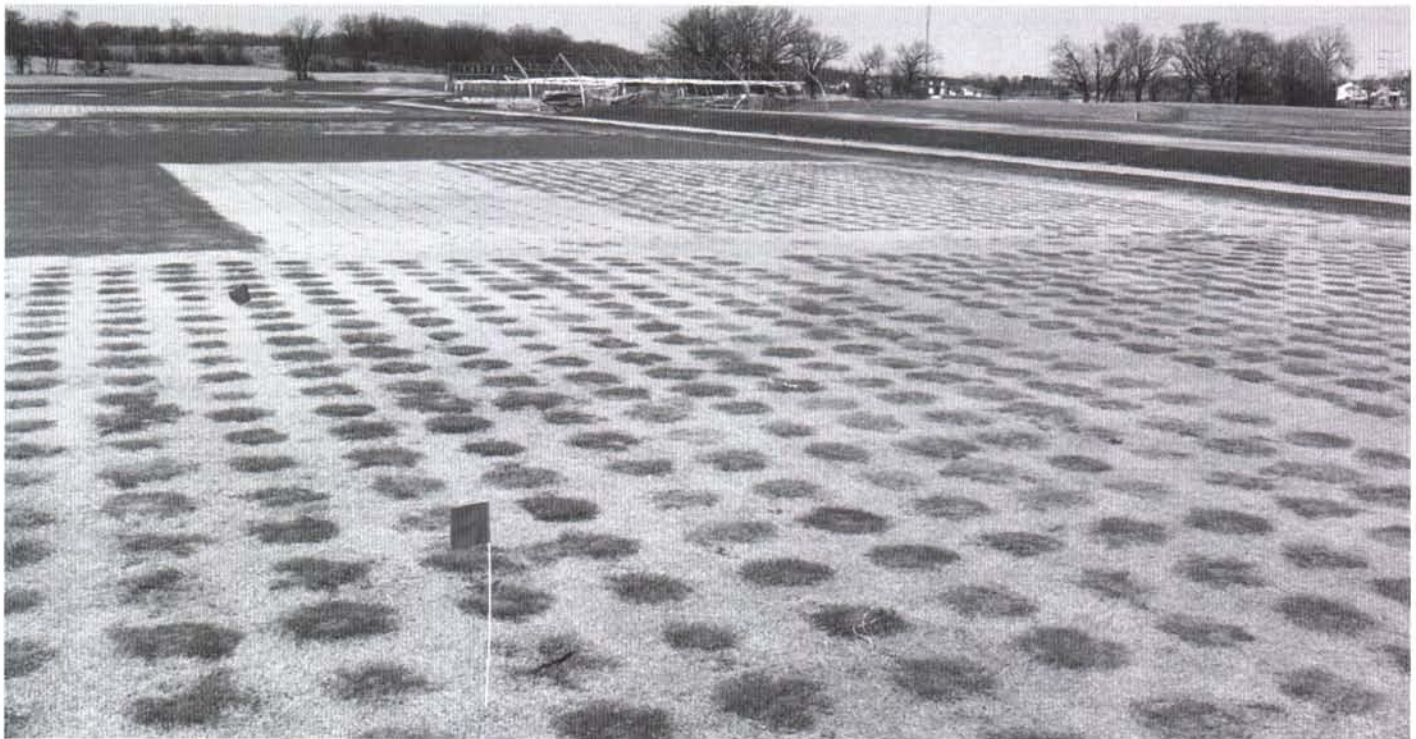
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The bentgrass clones in this breeding study survived, while the surrounding perennial ryegrass died under the ice.

winter's weather. They are all on higher well-drained ground and can't be compared with the species that were in the lower areas where ice accumulated.

We have lots of *Poa annua* var. *reptans* (creeping bluegrass) that is planted where the ice was. It typically has been slow to green up in past years, and I was sure it would not survive this winter under the ice. It appeared dead up until mid-April, but now on April 20th, it is starting to take on some color and will likely make it.

The researchers have assessed the damage at O.J. Noer and are repairing or replacing damaged plots according to what they determined. A tall fescue NTEP plot that was seeded in 2002 will be replaced with a different study. The winter kill was indiscriminate among the different cultivars of tall fescue. All of them died that were under ice. All the perennial ryegrass that died will be reseeded. The *Poa annua* that died will be bid farewell, as it was a contaminant that was not wanted in those studies.



The winter kill was indiscriminate among the nearly 150 different cultivars in this tall fescue NTEP as all were killed.

We learned lots at the Noer Facility from this winter's weather. I hope we don't see this much damage again, but on the positive side, it was a learning experience. Jerry's article

in the WTA Newsletter described the winter kill phenomenon very well. Let me know if you don't receive the newsletter and I can mail you a copy. ♣

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