



# A Normal End to an Abnormal Year

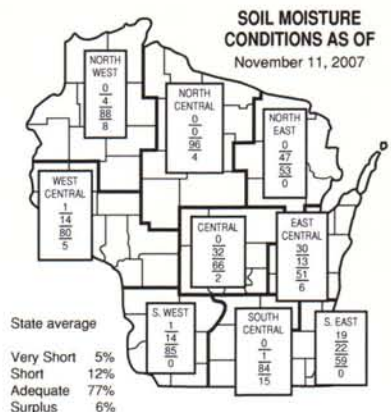
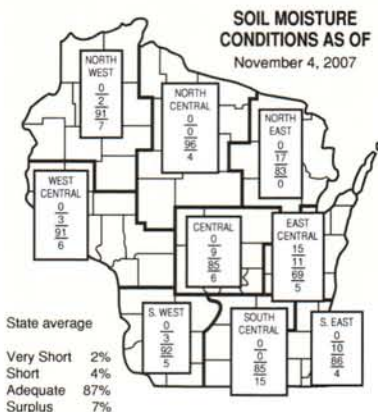
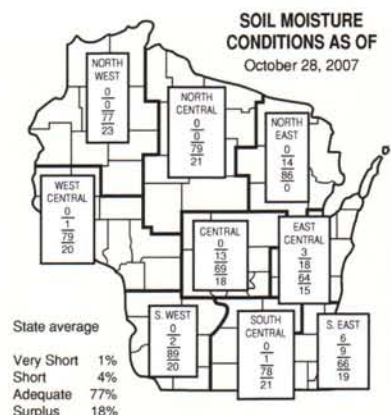
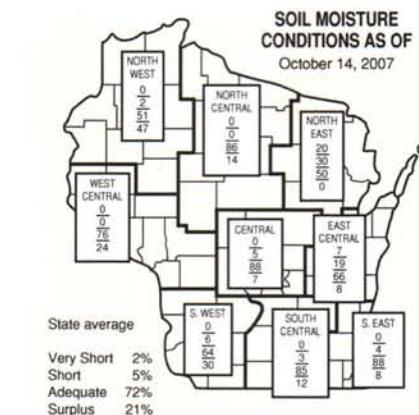
By Monroe S. Miller, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

The end of an unusual year is here, and this may be the most "normal" season of them all in this year of 2007. In our town there is some honest-to-goodness winter around us – snow and cold and frozen ponds. I love it! There were plenty of things we would like to have gotten done on the course before the snow and frozen weather arrived, but that work will be there when the weather is more favorable to get it done. It feels so good to have cold weather that I am not going to complain about it even a little bit.

The moisture status from around Wisconsin at the end of the growing season appears here courtesy of the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service. Mostly, the wild swing from extreme dry to extreme wet conditions has returned to about where it should be. Once again, at year's end, people will note, years down the road, that 2007 must have been a pretty regular year. It was anything but that, but the statistics don't tell the misery in between those wild swings. We, however, will be talking about this year for years to come.

Congratulations to Dr. John Stier - he was elected president of the C-5 Division of the Crop Science Society of America at their recently completed annual meeting in New Orleans. The Society is divided into divisions and the C-5 is the turf division. It will be more work for John but he will handle this assignment like all those he is given - with professionalism, enthusiasm and intelligence. From an outsider's viewpoint, his election reflects the great respect his academic colleagues around the country have for him.

And while we are handling out well-deserved accolades, here is



another one for you. Dr. Mike Kenna and Jim Snow have asked Dr. Chris Williamson to serve on the USGA Green Section research committee. These positions aren't extended haphazardly or without good reason; we can be proud of Chris for such an invitation. He also will do well, reflecting proudly on Wisconsin and providing valuable input for the betterment of the science of golf turf.

It was a treat to return from the Wisconsin basketball game on December 4th and read an email from Dr. Murray Clayton, chair of the Department of Plant Pathology. Murray was excited to report that Jim Kerns had officially accepted

the turfgrass pathology position at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Jim is finishing his PhD work at NC State under Lane Tredway and we should see him in Wisconsin by mid-summer.

Jim is the last turf position to fill and rounds out what I feel will be the strongest team in the country. Stier, Williamson, Soldat and Kerns will, in their careers, be synonymous with outstanding science, very capable graduate students and programs, the best in teaching and extension and outreach, and well trained undergraduate students. Their collective intellect and vision is complemented by a dedicated Agricultural Research Station (the Noer Facility) second to none in the country, a full com-



plement of undergrad scholarships and four graduate student fellowships. What they will need is the continued strong support from all corners of Wisconsin's formidable turfgrass industry, and I am positive that support will even grow stronger with time. The fact that these men are tenured (or will be) at one of the world's great institutes of learning and research pushes the Wisconsin program to the very top.

It is almost enough to make a grown man tear up with joy.

While I am singing the praises of our land grant university, it was reported in early November that the University of Wisconsin - Madison was ranked first in research expenditures among the nation's public universities. The campus received more than \$900 million in 2006, which was

the most at any public university.

According to the National Science Foundation the UW - Madison spent \$832 million in science and engineering, moving up to No.2 overall behind perennial front runner Johns Hopkins University, a private institution. JHO expended \$1.5 billion last year, which included \$709 million for defense and military related research. That is why they were ranked 1st!

The UW - Madison ranked ahead of UCLA, the combined campuses of the University of Michigan, and the UC - San Francisco.

Outside of science and engineering, the UW-Madison also came in first overall for 2006, spending \$73 million in education, business and the humanities. Harvard, Purdue, Texas and Oregon State followed.

What is impressive is this happened during a time of flat federal

budgets and increased competition from other universities. It gives you a notion of the strong faculty and research programs, which includes those professors and programs we deal with all the time in our profession. And I think it is worth noting that this prominence takes place in a state with only five million citizens.

Jacob Schneider passed his Master's degree exam on Monday, December 3rd. Jake earned his B.S. degree from the UW - Madison in turf management under the guidance of Professor Wayne Kussow. He entered grad school and Dr. John Stier's research program in the Department of Horticulture. Jake was also the first recipient of the Kurth Fellowship in turf. He studied the effectiveness of rain gardens in reducing runoff, and his work was



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featured at the WTA Field Day this summer.

Jake wants to be a golf course superintendent, and I predict he will make great contributions in the years to come. He will join the golf course staff at Blackhawk CC after the GCSAA conference in February 2008.

Mike Lyons was a happy man at our WGCSA annual meeting on November 18th at the American Club in Kohler. It was the end of 12 years as either a director or an

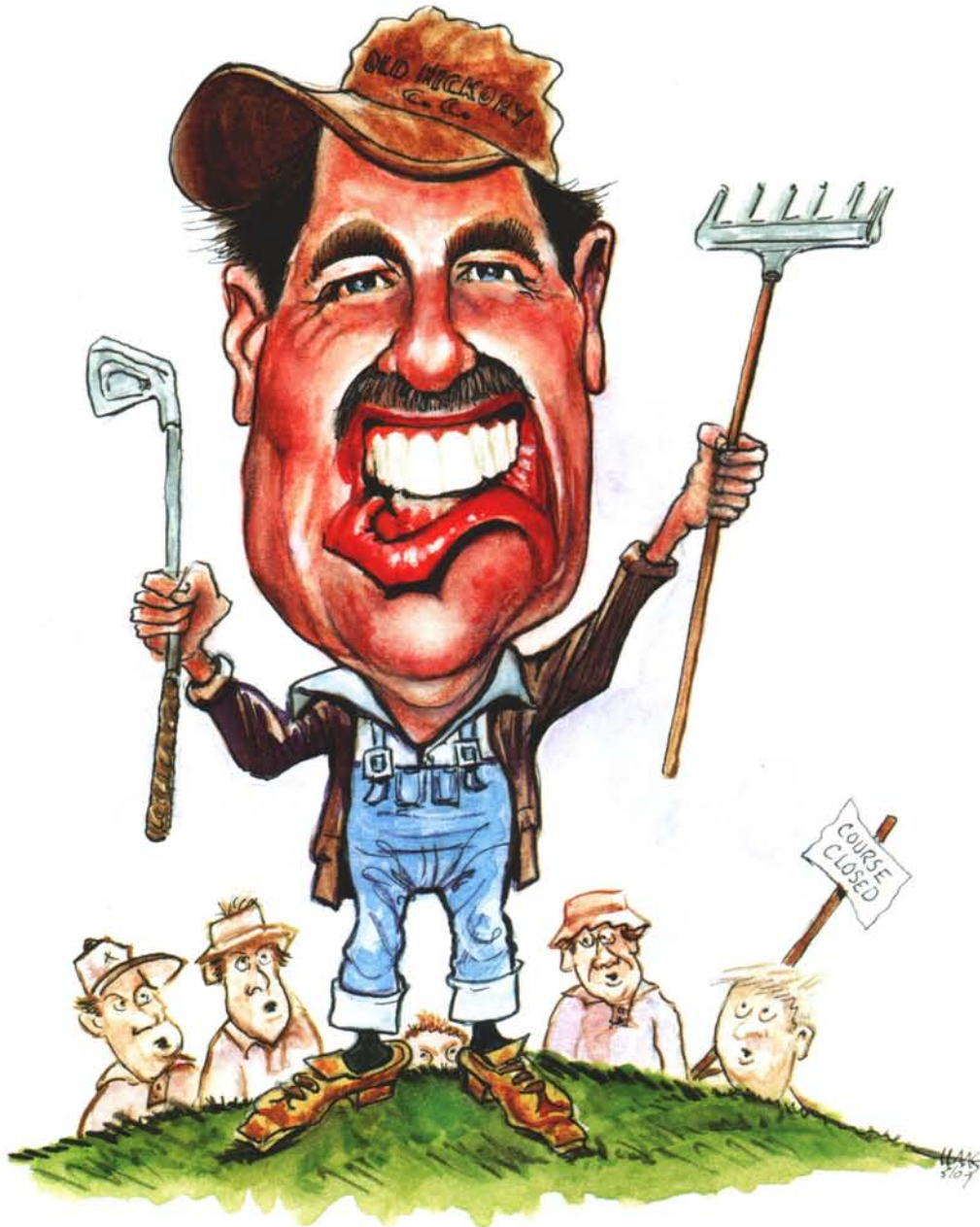
officer of our chapter for Mike. The last two years, of course, were spent as president.

Mike did an excellent job on our behalf. He's always been even-tempered and evenhanded, gotten things done and had a vision of where we should be headed. He is one of my favorites.

He is also one of Gene Haas' favorites. Gene is a well-known caricaturist and chooses his subjects primarily from the world of Wisconsin golf. It is high flattery to receive such a drawing or painting,

and he sent the following full color caricature of Mike Lyons to me. Once it appears here, Mike will receive the original as a reminder of his leadership days in the WGCSA.

Winter seems to be real with some white days for the holidays. And a white golf course means there is a happy superintendent as well. The meeting circuit starts soon enough; until then, happy trails to you. 🌱







# Thanks for the Memories!

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

Finally, after nearly two and a half decades, Cheryl Miller is getting her dining room table back. And a desk in the guest bedroom. There's also a possibility the lawn will be mowed in a more timely fashion and we will be able to plan a vacation around work schedules and nothing else. No wonder she is a happy girl!

The reason for our newly found freedom, of course, is that I am retiring as the volunteer editor of *The Grass Roots*. This is my last issue after 24 years in the position. It will take six months just to get the ink stains out of my hands!

Some are surprised that I am not feeling more melancholy or sadness. The reason is simple: the time demand is great and I have a long list of things I want (and some I need) to do. Also, as you age, your energy level diminishes and we are in a high energy profession. Once I am done with the responsibilities I get paid to handle at the golf course and head home at the end of the day, I am pooped. The days of staying up and typing, editing and writing until the wee small hours are over. So I have to move on.

When I started as editor I had several goals. The first intention was education, and with the help of our UW - Madison faculty (past and current), the USGA staff (past and current), and many sharp and well spoken golf course superintendents and colleagues in allied fields, I can declare "mission accomplished."

The need to record our history, from the personalities to the weather, was important. Gene Haas declared that goal accomplished after he had written his book, "Caring for the Green," a history of the WGCSA. *The Grass*

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*Roots* served as an information source for him.

I wanted *The Grass Roots* to provide a forum to express opinions of the day, and it did that. We also laughed at Steve Scoville's cartoons about us and about golf courses and got to know the character "Putter" quite well! We fell in love with Jen's and Bev's gorgeous covers. We tried to keep track of marriages and births, moves and promotions and hobbies. We mourned those colleagues and friends who passed away.

We got to know one another better through interviews. An awesome collection of photographs was developed and is still available - I wore out three or four or five cameras! Our social activities were written about, our golf games (loose translation there!) were noted and great accomplishments of individuals were applauded.

*The Grass Roots* was intended to make our chapter feel at least a little bit like a family. I always compared it to a small town newspaper that does that for the community it serves. Whether it succeeded or not is for others to decide.

There are a few other things I am especially proud of. Working as a vol-

unteer has great appeal, in the same way we have no paid officers or directors. The effort is made for the right reasons, not for money. Not all would agree, but that is how I feel.

For all the years we competed in the GCSAA chapter publications contest, we finished first in our category every years except one. And that year we finished second to a publication that mysteriously had slid into the volunteer category after having never been there previously. As Wayne Otto was given to say, "I was born at night, but not last night!"

I never missed an issue and never missed a deadline. It always seemed silly to receive a September/October issue at Christmas time!

And even if nothing else was accomplished, I feel we did always portray the golf course superintendents in Wisconsin in the light of truth which, in turn, reflected very favorably on us.

It is impossible to thank everyone who made a contribution and effort to *The Grass Roots* over the past 24 years, so I won't even try. Please, you know who you are and I ask you to accept my silent gratitude. On the other hand, in a general way, I extend heartfelt thanks to our advertisers. They paid all the bills! Without

them, we wouldn't have needed an editor, and I think about their tremendous contribution to our chapter in this way. The great people at Kramer Printing are tops at their game, and we were the beneficiary of their professionalism. I have made so many friends there, and I am going to miss waltzing in at 4:00 A.M. before I head to the golf course and talking foolishness with them. There are a few who won't miss having me turn out the lights, however!

I started as the editor of *The Grass Roots* when I was in my thirties, and now I am in my sixties! Enough already! When I started I would help paste up galley columns on hard boards to be photographed. Now, much of what I do is computer driven and electronic - such changes. I am going to miss the rush I got with every single issue when I would first see it, but I am not going to miss the time requirement.

Dave Brandenburg will take over as editor starting with the January/February 2008 issue. He will do a wonderful job; please help and support him as much as you did me.

Thanks for the memories. It has been a privilege and a lot of fun. 🌱





# WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN, IF NOT FOR MONROE MILLER:

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