

# The Year to Remember At Benson Golf Club

By DAVE SIME

Golf Course Superintendent at Benson Golf Club

**I**t all started back on November 15th with three inches of ice pellets and an all day rain that turned everything to a sheet of ice. I tried spreading Milorganite on a couple of greens and even went out with a roto-tiller to try and break up the ice, but neither seemed to work very well at this point.

By December 17th we had 12 inches of snow and about two inches of ice. I felt that if I was going to do something with the ice, I needed to do it before we got any more snow. We cleared off the greens and brought in a deep tine machine with solid tines to break up the ice layer. Our goal was to only chip away the ice and hopefully keep the turf from suffocating under the clear ice cap. The deep tine worked well to break up the ice layer but we did see some injury to the surface of the greens from the tines because of the different depths of ice. I felt that I could tolerate some mechanical damage better than the risk of leaving the ice cover.

Well, the best of plans seemed to be for nothing when two weeks later we received 1.3 inches of rain. But, while



MAINTENANCE CENTER AND NO. 2 GREEN underwater in foreground.

any time soon. As large as this tractor and blower are, I didn't do any damage to the greens, but we did get it stuck several times going from green to green and had to shovel it out. Within two days most of the ice had melted and the greens looked good except for the damage from the aerifier.

## Round 2 Begins

There was no April fool in Benson on the first when the temperature hit 65 degrees with a 35 mph wind out of the south. We lost about 8" of snow in one day and the water in the Chippewa River started to rise. By the next morning we had 4 inches of water in the shop and over half the course flooded. By Friday, my son Matt and I were able to canoe over 5, 14 and 16 greens and could get around the entire course by boat. We went to Montevideo on the 5th and 6th to help with sandbagging efforts and on Saturday the 5th it was 50 degrees and raining. By Sunday it was 15 degrees and a blizzard with 60 mph winds. We traded boats and canoes for ice skates to get around the course on Tuesday. At this point there was little we could do but wait for the water to go down and the ice to melt. By Monday the 14th I called Rob Panuska (*Hole Notes* editor) and updated my article and set the most recent pictures as the water began to recede. As you can see from the pictures of the 5th green, we will have plenty of firewood for winter.

\* \* \* \*

*(Editor's Note: My special thanks to Dave for the pictures and article. He told me that as the water was receding he and his assistant, Rick Lucken, were pumping water from the bunkers to wash the silt off the greens as they could get to them. He also said that the greens that were under water looked the best at this time as far as green-up went.)*



BENSON'S NO. 5 GREEN as the water recedes.

it did refreeze the ice chips from the deep tining, there were air bubbles throughout the layer. Every few weeks I went out and pulled samples from a few greens and brought them in to warm up, and they always greened up and looked good. To get the samples from the frozen turf I used a 2" hole saw and went 2" into the surface, then used a screwdriver to pop the plug out.

On March 17 I went out and blew the snow off all of the greens with a large three-point, rear-mounted blower. I rented it from the local John Deere dealer. The cost of this unit is around \$80,000 so I guess we won't be buying one of these