

# A Relatively Uneventful Season

## *...All Things Considered*

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"If I couldn't grow grass this summer, maybe I should consider another line of work," was the comment heard from a number of superintendents across the Region last year. Indeed, the weather was mild compared to the hot, stressful growing conditions experienced during the 1995 season. Only a few courses experienced even one day over 90 degrees.

Of course, it never hurts to enter the growing season in good condition. Courses that stumbled out of the starting blocks, due to winterkill to *Poa annua*, were few and far between. The winter weather was unusually mild -- a familiar pattern over the past few years. Warm weather during March and April resulted in early green-up, which set the stage for a considerable amount of early season play. Heavy play before vigorous turf growth occurs was a concern at many popular courses. The mild winter and the thinning caused by early play on semi-dormant turf were probably contributing factors for the bumper crop of weeds that plagued many courses. Cover, dandelions and crabgrass were especially troublesome.

Dollar spot control was a challenge for most superintendents. It was definitely the number one problem across the North Central tier of states. The weather conditions were ideal for intense disease activity practically all sum-

mer. To make matters worse, dollar spot pressure did not subside very much during September and October. Standard fungicide programs fell flat on their face or, at best, provided marginal control unless the interval between applications was modified to compensate for heavy disease pressure. A fair amount of take-all patch was diagnosed on a surprising number of old and new courses this summer as well.

In spite of the hype over bentgrass dead spot, there has yet to be documented cases of this disease in Wisconsin, Minnesota or Michigan -- according to the plant disease diagnostic labs in these states. There are a few suspect greens on a few new courses (very few) that have some symptoms, but the pathogen has not yet been isolated from affected tissue. It's probably only a matter of time before this problem is discovered in the Region. Many superintendents who think they have seen it on their greens this summer were more than likely looking at ball mark damage and/or dollar spot.

With a few exceptions, most of the Region experienced ample rainfall this season. Too much, in fact, for some superintendents who battled 6- to 8-inch rain events that fell within a 12- to 24-hour period more than once this summer. Devastating streambank erosion and bunker washouts were seen on many Turf Advisory Service visits.

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