

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL UPDATE

On The Road With The USGA

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The more things change, the more they stay the same. Despite all our wonderful technology in today's golf turf management, weather is still the number one factor in determining turf quality and playability. Most areas of the region experienced a quick snap to cold last November, which brought on some winter-related injuries. The winter-related weather concerns, in most cases, tied to either drainage limitations or newly planted areas that simply did not have a chance to mature before the cold hit.

Early this spring we experienced warm temperatures and very dry weather coming out of the winter. Since the nighttime temperatures continued to fall back during this time soil temperatures remained low, and consistent growth was simply not occurring. The next twist was the wet weather pattern, which lingered for a few weeks and compromised most maintenance efforts moving into mid-spring. More recently, the weather patterns have become a bit more typical with the heat and humidity we've come to expect in late spring moving into early summer. The combination does pose the question, what's next? If Mother Nature combines hot and wet in the days ahead all of what we've been through over the last few months will be dwarfed in comparison.

Ultimately, the possibility of harsh weather is one of the primary reasons why we do things like aeration, tree removal, sound fertilization that includes spoon-feeding through the summer, and establish mowing heights that balance health and playability. While it's always possible to get away with less than solid efforts in one of these areas, harsh weather becomes the day of reckoning. Hopefully we won't experience tough weather ahead, but it's also hoped that your maintenance program has prepared for the worst.

Dollar spot disease activity continues to be an issue throughout the region. In fact, for a number of courses the intensity seems to have picked up where it left off last year. While minimizing dollar spot disease damage, consider the amount of water used as a carrier with fungicide applica-

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tions. Equally, reduce the time of leaf wetness in the morning by dragging dew. It's also been reported by a number of superintendents that better control is achieved by spraying fairly dry turf as opposed to over spraying dew. Further, maintain a preventative posture with dollar spot disease control as the problem is much more difficult to handle once inoculum builds up. In this case, preventative is IPM at its best. A curative approach will often require a higher fungicide input and still yield poor control.

The beetles are flying through most areas of the region, and as such, grub control needs to be finalized. Last year a number of courses applied insecticides too early, and as a result experienced damage in late summer/early fall. Carefully consider timing relative to the targeted pests and product being used.

Remember, as we move into the summer months, keep it as dry as applicable variables allow. Hopefully, Mother Nature will aid our efforts.

(Editor's Note: Bob Brame may be reached at 859-356-3272.)

*The game has such a hold on golfers
because they compete not only against an opponent,
but also against the course, against par,
and most surely -- against themselves."*

- Arnold Palmer