

# They Keep Going and Going and Going ...

By **BOB VAVREK**  
*USGA Agronomist*

The end of the year may be close at hand, but the end of the golfing season remains elusive. Extended periods of sunny December weather and temperatures in mid- 40's abound across the northern tier of the Region. Like the Energizer Bunny, golfers won't quit and some courses will literally be worse for the wear next spring.

Winter play is always a controversial topic during mid-November through December, particularly this season when rounds have been down at many courses. Owners perceive late season play as an opportunity to recover revenue lost earlier in the season. Some golfers at private courses believe that their year-round dues entitles them to year-round play. Consistent snow cover will settle this touchy issue, but until then, golfers need to take a common sense approach regarding winter play.

Granted, a round or two played on frozen turf or turf that is completely thawed, relatively firm, and dry will not adversely affect the course. Golfers need to keep in mind, however, that the playing surfaces have no ability to recover from wear once the turf enters winter dormancy. The damage caused by concentrated foot traffic or motorized carts will have a cumulative, adverse effect on the turf until the grass begins growing actively again next spring. Furthermore, the damage caused by play across partially thawed turf can be an even greater concern. Playing surfaces can be rutted and root systems can be sheared by traffic when only the top half inch or so of turf has thawed - a common scenario that occurs on a mild winter day after frost develops in the soil profile.

Follow as many of these simple guidelines as possible to minimize damage from winter play.

- Keep carts off the course.
- Play temporary greens.
- Do not open the course when there is frost on the turf.
- Initiate play from a spot adjacent to (not on) the tees because divots will not recover.

An interesting option to consider regarding off-season golf is to play the course in reverse. Tee off from the approach and play to temporary green located adjacent to the tees. Players rarely look backwards during a round of golf, so you just might be treated to a picturesque view of the layout that you never knew existed.

Have safe and Happy Holidays.

Source: Bob Vavrek, [rvavrek@usga.org](mailto:rvavrek@usga.org) or 262-797-8743.

## *On The Road With The USGA*

By R.A. (Bob) BRAME, *USGA Director*

For most of the lower portion of the North Central Region November was a very mild month. Rainfall increased and for many it was needed as we head into winter. Overall, it was a good fall for projects and growing-in new plantings. Hopefully, the winter will be equally kind.

Now is the time to finalize plans for snow mold protection. Past history is the best means of zeroing in on any needed control strategy. Some courses, in the lower portion of the region, have found it unnecessary to apply snow mold protection fungicides. Yet, turf that is weak heading into the winter, especially greens, may need preventative protection. New plantings and sites with a past history of snow mold damage should also be considered for fungicide treatment. Based on the weather pattern over the last few weeks, and the change that appears to be developing over the last couple of days, now would be a good time to apply any preventative treatments.

The mild November weather has increased the need to mow. With the exception of warm-season grasses, which can benefit from being a little shaggy heading into the winter, continue mowing as growth dictates.

There also is time for late season and/or dormant feeding. Late season feeding is applied while the turf is still growing, using predominately readily-available nutrients. Dormant feeding then follows a couple weeks after active growth has stopped. Slow release fertilizers work well for dormant feeding, and many continue to achieve good results with natural organic materials, especially on greens. Yearly, representative chemical analysis should guide fertilization efforts. We'd be happy to review your soil analysis and aid in tweaking feeding efforts.

The Kentucky Turfgrass Council Conference and Show in Bowling Green was a big success. Hope to see some of you at the OTF (Ohio Turfgrass Foundation) Conference in Columbus during the first week of December. Happy Holidays to one and all and thanks for your ongoing support of the USGA Green Section. Feel free to call upon us at any time.

Bob Brame, [bobbrame@usga.org](mailto:bobbrame@usga.org) or 859-356-3272.