

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL UPDATE

ON THE ROAD WITH THE USGA

By **BOB BRAME**
Agronomist

It has been an unusual spring. Much of the lower portion of the North Central Region went through a period when the daytime temperatures were warm (mid 70's and above) and yet the nighttime temperatures dropped back significantly; and as a result, holding down soil temperatures. Those trying to recover from winter injury or growing in newly-planted surfaces are very aware of what the cool soil temperatures did to growth.

Most areas of the lower North Central Region had been dry until just recently. Yet, the recent rains have reversed the year-to-date totals that were previously in the red. Despite daily rain over the last seven to ten days the Cincinnati area continues to be more than six inches down for the year. Clearly, weather conditions are a very real issue in manag-

The last few days of travel have exposed a number of active diseases, which include *Microdochium nivale* (pink snow mold), dollar spot, and take-all patch. Many golf courses also are experiencing cutworm activity. Perhaps a bit early, but weather patterns have been unusual.

There continues to be significant discussion about *Poa annua* seed head control on greens. Unfortunately, this is not a simple topic that can be handled the same in all situations. The most common strategy for minimizing seed head impact on ball roll is to utilize Primo. This plant growth regulator does not stop seed head production, but it will soften the negative playability that can otherwise occur. For other options that may be better fitted to your course, give us a call (859/ 356-3272).

Another common topic on recent visits, and one that often occurs in the spring, is rough playability. On one hand it is important to avoid slowing play due to the cutting height or grass density. On the other hand, rough means not easy. After all, without rough there would be no incentive for hitting the fairway. Ideally, try to establish a mowing height that balances health and playability over a season long perspective. A slightly higher cut in the spring will yield better turf dependability in late summer. Often the best approach is to mow more frequently in the spring and maintain the cutting height that provides the greatest package of year-round benefits.

As we move into late spring and early summer, initiate the use of soluble fertilizers applied through a spray tank at light and frequent rates (spoon-feeding). The target is to protect what was established over the fall and spring and not to push additional topgrowth. Thus, should an application of a soluble fertilizer yield a noticeable growth increase,

reduce the rate. Consistency with spoon-feeding will improve turf quality and dependability as we move into the summer months.

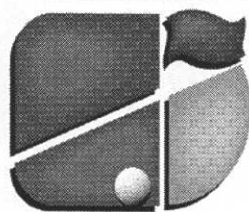
As always, feel free to contact our office should concerns arise or if you see anything unique and worthy of passing on.

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(Editor's Note: Bob Brame can be reached at bobbrame@usga.org or 859-356-3272.)

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ing golf turf. Not a surprising or profound statement, but often golfers fail to consider how dramatically weather conditions impact turf growth and, as a result, course playability. It reminds me of an often used phrase, "the only thing that happens fast in agriculture is crop failure."



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