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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT'S DESK

Money: It's a Drag



As a bit of a naive and altruistic person, I sometimes get the feeling that I'm living in the shadows. I was reminded of this during discussions with a number of past presidents of the MGCSA a few weeks ago, and again at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Las Vegas. The message from both of these encounters is one we've all heard before: Money makes the world go 'round. Duh.

In a place like Las Vegas, where a hundred bucks can slip through your fingers like a one-shot lead at Augusta, you can easily lose your perception of what a dollar is worth. Twenty bucks in the slots here, fifty at the crap table there, another ten at the blackjack table, and suddenly you're trying to scrape together the ninety-nine cents for a hot dog. Amazing. Yet step back a few paces and take a look at what the players have helped finance, a few dollars at a time. Mega resorts of gargantuan scale. Colossal structures of extreme magnitude. Dizzying attractions. You get the picture. The point? The eighty bucks from one guy didn't build the city. But add it to the other twenty nine million visitors per year that contribute eight, and pretty soon you're talking about real money.

So what has the financial development of Las Vegas got to do with the past presidents of the MGCSA you ask? Wise question, young grasshopper! AS a mission of study, I informally polled seven of our former leaders as to their thoughts on the way our association is performing. I did this because in the course of doing business, it is sometimes easy to forget to listen to the customer. (Think of what you would hear if you called the past presidents of your club!) Thankfully, these gentlemen were more than willing to share their views and comments about our organization. Overall, I heard positive remarks regarding things like *Hole Notes*, education opportunities and research. There were, however, a few points of contention. Most notably, and with surprise, the question of our financial support of the Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation was brought up. (See article on Page 5.)

The connection is, I hope, obvious. The support of the MTGF has come a few dollars at a time. The fact that more and more people (visitors) attend the annual conference every year means that we are now talking about real money. If we attract more people, we will make more money. (Why do you think Las Vegas continues to grow?)

In our case, the ability to draw attendees from a much larger pool of folks has allowed for larger profits and the ensuing debate over where the money should go.

The challenge for our association is, while working within the framework of the Foundation, to learn how to make the best use of the profits.) This must be done carefully and wisely. For if we derail the MTGF, we will have effectively burned down the casino.

* * * *

Be sure to attend the MGCSA March Mini-Seminar. Vice-President Jim Nicol and ex-officio James Gardner have both endorsed Jack Matteffy as a "must see!" As we all need the best employees to effectively run our operations, we all need to get the latest information on how to hire and keep these key people. See you there! — Fred Taylor, MGCSA President

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1997 MGCSA Monthly Meeting Schedule

April 29 The Lafayette Club • Dinner Only Speaker: Bob Vavrek, USGA • Host: John Harris
June 16 Cannon GC • Host: Jeff Backstrom
July 14 Scholarship Scramble Hidden Creek GC • Host: Marty Terveer
August 18 MGCSA Amateur Championship Rush Creek GC • Host: Tom Fuller
September 14 Stodola Research Scramble The Preserve at Grand View Lodge • Host: Tom Kientzle
October 6 Les Bolstad University of Minn. GC • Host Charlie Pooch
December 10, 11 & 12 MGCSA Annual Meeting MTGF Conference & Trade Show Minneapolis Convention Center

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ICE ALERT!

By Robert C. Vavrek
*Agronomist, USGA Green Section
North Central Region*

Due to the unusual weather patterns during November and December many greens and low lying fairway areas on golf courses throughout Minnesota have become covered in ice that varies from less than one-half inch to several inches thick. In response to numerous requests for recommendations regarding the potential for winterkill to turf, particularly *Poa annua*, under prolonged periods of ice cover, the following information is being made available to you with the assistance of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association.

Ice cover on turf is not an unusual event in Minnesota; what is unusual is the length of time the ice will remain on the playing surfaces unless a midwinter thaw occurs. The most common question is: Will over 100 days of solid ice cover cause injury to *Poa* greens? Should the ice be physically removed? . . . There is no clear-cut answer.

The most common causes of winterkill to turf are (1) crown hydration — the injury that occurs to the growing points of grass plants during freeze/thaw events, (2) cold temperature fungal diseases, (3) direct low temperature kill to exposed turf and (4) desiccation that commonly occurs on elevated sites on the course that lack snow cover during windy frigid weather. I agree with many superintendents and researchers in that both *Poa* and bentgrass can survive over 100 days of ice cover if the turf has had an opportunity to harden off properly during late fall and when the ice retains consistent snow cover all through the winter.

The "suffocation" of turf under ice probably occurs where sunlight penetrates black ice (clear ice) and causes

a slight warming at the playing surface. A thin layer of free water and an increase in temperature under the ice might stimulate microbial activity and cause the turf to break dormancy — either condition could result in the buildup of toxic gases or carbon dioxide. A similar process might occur when ice forms on greens before the ground freezes. The bottom line is that

there is little scientific research in turf literature to support this process. The injury to turf that is frequently blamed on ice cover probably occurs during the initial freezing process or immediately after the ice melts from the greens in the late winter or early spring — the time when the turf has very little tolerance to cold temperatures.

What to Do or Not to Do

First, determine whether injury to turf has already occurred by chipping through the ice and removing a small plug of turf from the low lying area of the green. Grow out the plug in a warm sunny location (a greenhouse would be ideal) to document the health of the turf. Monitor the turf every few weeks until spring.

More importantly, remove snow and as much ice as possible from greens during or just prior to the first significant spring thaw. The turf will have little tolerance to cold temperatures and be very susceptible to crown hydration at this time. Provide every opportunity for the water from melting ice and snow to move off the put-

ting surfaces. Some superintendents apply a dark material (Milorganite, dark sand, etc.) to ice on greens during late winter to accelerate the melting process. Dark materials, though, are only effective on relatively thin ice covers of no more than an inch or two thick. The key to success is to prevent water pooling in low lying areas of the greens during the day and then freeze-

ICE SURVEY

The MGCSA will be conducting a survey related to ice accumulation and damage. If you have an ice buildup, please keep a record of weather patterns, removal methods, etc. and refer to this information when filling out the Spring Survey.

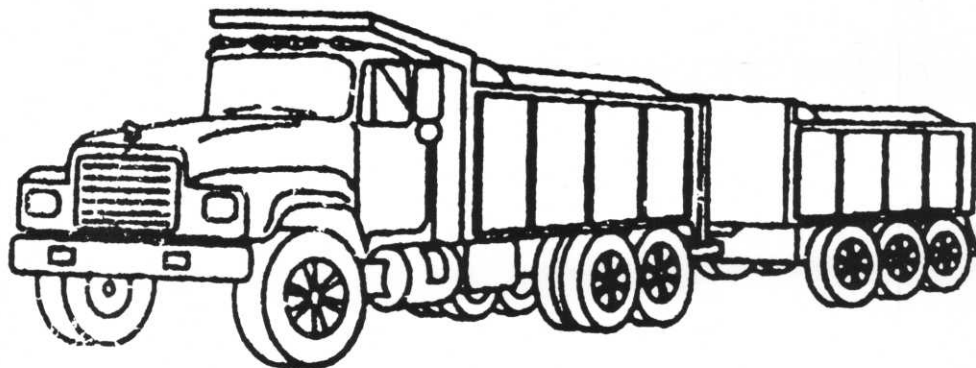
Hopefully, by compiling this information, we can determine effective methods of dealing with this problem in the future.

ing at night. Again, most of the injury to turf that is blamed on ice cover probably occurs just after the ice melts, especially when cold nights follow the initial thaw.

The Risk of Ice Removal

The ice and snow cover on your course may be a blessing in disguise considering the amount of severe desiccation that occurred on exposed turf last winter at many courses in

(Continued on Page 7)



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Ice Alert—

(Continued from Page 5)

western Minnesota, Nebraska and the Dakotas. Desiccation affects bentgrass and *Poa* alike, and several relatively new courses experienced significant losses of bentgrass on exposed putting surfaces that later required extensive overseeding, plugging and sodding last spring. Consistent ice and snow cover would have prevented these losses of turf.

Furthermore, removing ice from greens during midwinter is almost an impossible task unless the greens are covered with a geotextile fabric that provides a barrier between the ice on the turf. The risk of disrupting the playing surface or removing part of the turf along with the ice is great when solid ice cover is chipped away using solid time aerators, Verti-Drain units or spikers — not to mention the damage this process can do to the maintenance equipment. Even if it were possible to safely remove ice from an uncovered green, the turf would be exposed to the wind and cold temperatures unless snow were blown back onto the greens. In my opinion, the questionable benefits of midwinter ice removal is not worth the effort.

There may be isolated courses where ice removal is beneficial and where the removal of ice will not create a risk of surface disruption. . . but as a general recommendation, the time spent removing ice would be better spent during the early spring — when the potential for winterkill is greater.

Regardless of what course of action is taken at your course, monitor the condition of the turf frequently and keep the golfers well informed as to the possibility of finding less than

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ideal playing conditions next spring. The USGA's Turf Advisory Service will be available from early spring throughout the season should turf-related problems occur.

Good luck and feel free to contact the USGA Green Section Office in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, for further information regarding this and other agronomic questions.

Don't put up with unplanned water hazards...

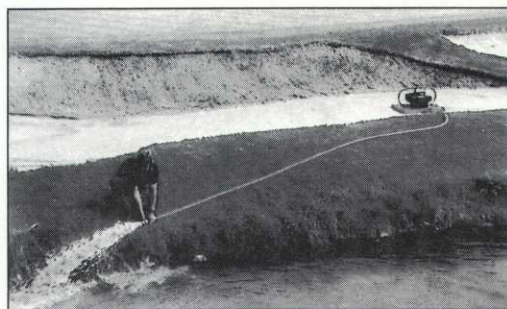
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Supporting the MTGF

...is it in our best interest?

By FRED TAYLOR
President, MGCSA

There is little question that the emergence of the Minnesota Turf & Grounds Foundation as a benefactor of thousands of dollars in revenue from their annual conference has raised more than a few eyebrows among the membership of the MGCSA. Questions such as "What are they going to do with the money? . . . Why doesn't the MGCSA get that money? and why are we supporting the entire industry?" have been circulating throughout our organization. It is important that this issue be brought out in the open and discussed. To this end, I would like to give my impression of the MTGF, its benefits to members of the MGCSA and the cost to our members.

First of all, we must remember that the MTGF is a foundation, not an association. It does not collect dues from members — you are a member of the MTGF automatically by being a member of an association that is affiliated with the MTGF. Every attempt is made to encourage new individuals or firms to join an allied association first. AS a foundation, the MTGF was created to support and promote the turf and grounds industry, of which, golf courses are a part.

The way in which the MTGF supports our industry is obvious in some cases, and a little vague in others. The most obvious contributions are the educational opportunities offered at the annual conference. Think back a few years when the MGCSA conference was held at the Northland Inn. If you compare that trade show to the current MTGF trade show, you must agree that the current show is by far and away more educational and valuable to attendees. As far as the educational sessions are concerned, the current format allows for more choices of topics and a greater number of

nationally recognized "headline speakers." The cost to attend this conference is about the same as it was at the Northland. What this boils down to is a better conference for the same fee. To me, that is a good deal for everyone in our association. The attendance statistics confirm this position, as 567 people from the golf course industry registered for the 1996 conference as compared to the roughly 350 or so that attended at the Northland in 1992. This represents a 60% increase in participation. A better value does attract more people.

There are other ways that the MTGF has been of help to our industry and our association. Some of these are difficult to quantify, much like Jimmy the Greek's "intangibles" which he used to help handicap football games. One of the intangibles is the opportunity to meet and interact with green industry people that are not from the golf course. I personally have met some really great people from the parks, sports turf, cemetery and school supervisors associations, not to mention a new group of non-turf vendors that can help me with my non-turf supplies and equipment. If networking is the buzzword of the future, then having the folks from the other allied associations around to communicate with is a good deal for us.

Another intangible that has come from being involved with the MTGF, is improved relations with the University of Minnesota. It is no secret that the MGCSA and the U of M have had a somewhat tenuous and at times strained relationship over the past ten or fifteen years. I can't put my finger on why this started, but I believe that mending the fences is *always* better than tearing them down. In our turf

community, it seems to me that the industry should support the University, and the University should in return support the industry. It works in the fields of medicine, business and agriculture; why can't it work in turf and grounds? Through the efforts of many people in the MTGF, the bridge between the University and MGCSA is getting easier to cross. Ultimately, there will be a strong and unified relationship between the two.

Related to the University, the emergence of the Empire Township project as a potential educational and research facility for turf and grounds is a huge bonanza for our industry. If built as planned, this will be the greatest asset to the Minnesota golf turf community that has ever existed. There are many, many possibilities associated with this research center, and there is no group of people that would benefit more from such a project than golf course superintendents. It is unlikely that the University would provide the land for the project without the support of a unified turf and grounds industry. Admittedly, it's not a sure bet, but from a cost/benefit standpoint to the membership of the MGCSA, it's no-cost, huge-return potential is a "no-brainer."

Another benefit derived through the MTGF is the ability for the Foundation to elevate the knowledge and understanding of individuals that have, in the past, not had any educational opportunities offered to them. Obviously, this has no direct impact on members of the MGCSA; we have had the luxury of greater education for years. But indirectly, helping others by making turf and grounds education available, will support professionalism throughout the entire industry. Again,

(Continued on Page 11)

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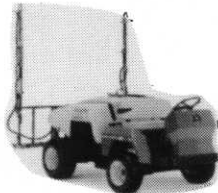


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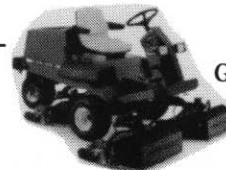


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