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# HOLE NOTES

Official Publication  
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## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT'S DESK

### Mother Nature Can Be Tough To Figure Out



Minnesotans enjoyed one of their mildest winters in a very long time. We kept hearing that it was the result of a weather phenomenon called El Nino. However, while we were enjoying winter, those in the southern part of the U.S. were not as fortunate. Severe storms and cold weather were the norm.

Then we enjoyed a beautiful spring with summer-like temperatures. Golf courses were in full swing. Many of us were aerifying greens in mid-May, looking for rapid recovery that goes along with warmer than normal soil temperatures. After the tornadoes that ripped through the Le Center, Comfrey and St. Peter areas had come and gone, we were ready to embrace the nice weather that June is noted for.

**As the saying goes "when you think you have Mother Nature figured out, she throws a curve ball."** Nighttime temps dropped into the low thirties and daytime temperatures were topping off at about 55°. All growth on putting greens came to a halt. Nuts! If it could have stayed warm for one more week greens would have been perfect. High winds blew over many trees, along with the power lines that feed electricity to our homes. Not once, but twice.

Finally, you have your golf course cleaned up and the membership is able to play. You head home to take the tree off your roof and patch the leak. Thank goodness the city is going to pick up the debris.

Only one or two trees are really going to be missed. Your neighbors are safe. Family life is getting back to normal. We wait. Wait for what?

The next curve ball.

\* \* \* \*

**Dr. Jon Powell has accepted the new position in the Turfgrass Pathology department at the University of Minnesota.** He received his Ph.D. from Michigan State University while studying under Dr. Joe Vargas. Jon is a native of Michigan and his family owns a golf course in the southern part of that state.

While serving on the selection committee, I was able to appreciate the difficulty working with the strict hiring parameters the university requires. Although there were many qualified candidates, Jon showed the most promise. He has a lot of enthusiasm and will be an asset to our turfgrass community. We look forward to his arrival on September 1, 1998.

— Jim Nicol, CGCSA  
MGCSA President

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## Inside This Issue of Hole Notes

### 1 Members Travel to Creeks Bend For June Meeting and Mixer

By Scott Turtinen

### 5 Late Fall Sand Topdressing

By Don Taylor, U of W—River Falls

### 10 Turf Tourney Raises \$6,110 For Research and Education

By Scott Turtinen

### 13 Tartan Park Golf Course

— Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System

### 15 The Little Course With the Big Name

By Michael Klatte, CGCS

### 19 GCSAA Student Chapter At University of Minnesota

By Mike Harrington

### 22 Establishing an Interim Program

By George Hamilton

### 24 Affiliate News

### 27 Product Deliveries in Jeopardy Without Proof of Upgrade

By Bill Keegan and Dave Brown

### 28 New Department to Focus On GCSAA Membership Standards

— GCSAA

## Departments

### 3 From Your President's Desk

By Jim Nicol, CGCS

### 25 Membership Report

By James Johnson, CGCS

### 26 Classified Ads

### 30 Editor's Corner

By Steve Shumansky

## Advertisers

Century Rain Aid	21
Cushman Motor Co.	IFC
Double Eagle Golf Construction	18
Duinick Bros., Inc.	Back Cover
Glenn Rehbein Companies	18
Hartman	4
Hedberg	13
Herfort-Norby	11
IMC Vigoro	10
Leitner Company	Inside Back Cover
MTI Distributing Co.	16
MTI Distributing Co.	17
North Star Turf Supply	8
North Star Turf Supply	14
Par Aide	7
Paskvan Consulting	23
Peterson Seed Co.	22
P&H Warehouse	6
Plaisted Companies	29
Polfus Implement	9
Polfus Implement	10
Precision Course	26
Precision Turf & Chemical, Inc.	23
Prinsco	20
Rohling Green Corp.	26
Scotts	27
Secor	29
Wilber-Ellis	12
Williams & Gill	3

## 1998 MGCSA CALENDAR

July 20	MGCSA Scholarship Scramble Elm Creek Golf Links of Plymouth Host Superintendent: Mike Klatte, CGCS
August 17	MGCSA Championship North Links GC Host Superintendent: Jerry Storjohann
September 14	Stodola Scramble Pebble Creek CC Host Superintendent: Cary Femrite
October 5	Chaska Town Course Host Superintendent: Mark Moers
November 14	Minnesota Zoo Family Outing
December 10	MGCSA Annual Meeting Minneapolis Convention Center

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# Late Fall Sand Topdressing

## *Water Retention and Influences on Winter Injury*

MID-YEAR REPORT FOR THE GCSAA/MGCSA COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT

MAY 1998

Principal Investigator: D.H. Taylor, University of Wisconsin-River Falls  
Cooperators: Kevin Clunis, Superintendent - St. Croix National Golf Club, Somerset, Wis.  
Richard Grundstrom, Superintendent - Indian Hills Golf Club, Stillwater, Minn.  
Daniel Swenson, Superintendent - River Falls Golf Club, River Falls, Wis.

### Purpose

The objectives of this research project are to determine (1) if sands commonly used for topdressing golf greens in the North Central region of the United States vary significantly in their water retention characteristics, (2) if heavy rates of topdressing just prior to winter are likely to increase winter damage, (3) if brushing sand into greens following late fall sand topdressing affects winter survival of the turf, and (4) to document climatic conditions at the time of late fall topdressing which may affect winter survival.

### Location of Project

The laboratory and greenhouse experiments are being conducted at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Field plots were applied on practice greens at River Falls Golf Club, River Falls, Wis.; Indian Hills Golf Club, Stillwater, Minn., and St. Croix National Golf Club, Somerset, Wis.

### Rationale/Purpose

Topdressing golf greens just prior to winter has been recommended for many years as a method of reducing desiccation. This research was initiated as a result of several incidents of winter damage on golf greens in Minnesota which seemed to be associated with late fall topdressing practices. Suggestions of the causes led to considerable speculation, but inadequate answers. The research was begun in the summer of 1997 and only some of the laboratory measurements have been completed. Field plots were established at three golf courses in November 1997 and data from the first winter are now available.

### Methods

Seven sands, five sand/peat mixtures and four sand/amendment mixtures (other than peat) have been selected for laboratory physical and water retention analysis. Analyses will include particle size, pH, organic matter

content, water retained at several potential energy levels, and saturated hydraulic conductivity. Greenhouse experiments will be conducted to assess water retention in thin layers of sand placed over a typical root-zone soil mixture. Field plots were established on one golf green at each of three courses. The treatments consisted of a topdressing layer applied in late fall after winter disease fungicides had been applied. Treatments consisted of the following:

- A control plot with no topdressing applied.
- Four sand or mixes: 1) uniform, silica sand, 2) 85/15 by volume mortar sand/peat.
- Two topdressing depths: 1) 2.4 mm or 0.09 inches and 2) 4.8 mm or 9.18 inches.
- Brushed vs. unbrushed treatment: topdressed material will be brushed into the turf following topdressing for the brushed plots or left without brushing for the unbrushed plots. The brushed vs. unbrushed treatment was only accomplished at one golf course this past winter, as the plots at the other two courses received snow before the brushing could take place.

At each location turf and soil parameters were measured in the early spring as soon as growth was clearly evident to determine the effect of topdressing on winter survival, early spring color, turf temperatures and soil moisture.

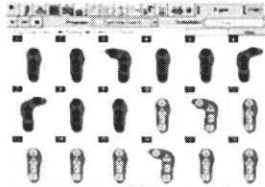
### Results

This report will focus on the results of the first-year field plots which were applied in early November 1997 with results of the overwintering being recorded in March and April 1998. The winter was a very unusual one indeed. Temperatures during December, January and February were much warmer than usual and snowfall was considerably below normal. Topdressing was applied to the plots

*(Continued on Page 7)*

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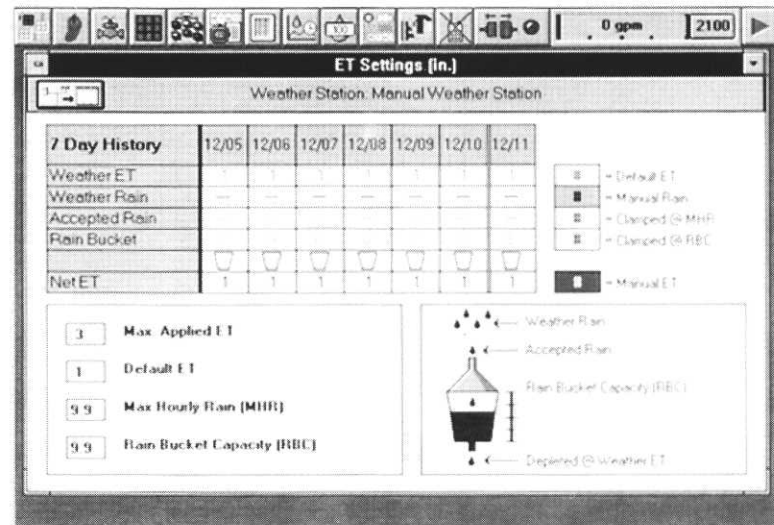
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## Topdressing Results:

(Continued from Page 5)

at River Falls Golf Club on November 7, 1997 with half the plots being brushed in on November 8. Figure 1 shows the plots after topdressing at River Falls. Plots at Indian Hills Golf Club were topdressed on November 10, 1997 and at St. Croix National Golf Club on November 11, 1997. We received snow on November 11 and although it melted off the plots at St. Croix National, the plots did not dry out sufficiently to brush in the topdressing at St. Croix National or at Indian Hills.



Figure 1. Topdressed plots at River Falls.

The plots remained snow-covered through most of November, but melted off at River Falls and St. Croix National in early December. It was evident that topdressed sands were influencing the rate of snow melt, with the plots topdressed with mortar sand or mortar/sand peat melting faster than the silica or silica sand/peat topdressed plots or the control plots (See Figure 2 as an example). We assume it was related to the darker color of the mortar sand as compared to the white silica sand.

We received very little snow until near the end of December, at which time significant snowfall occurred and the plots remained snow-covered until late in February. On February 21 it rained lightly and the snow had completely left the plots at River Falls Golf Club (Figure 3). Plots at St. Croix National and Indian Hills were still snow-covered but melted off within seven days.

By March 28 the turf had begun to grow and obvious differences between the color on plots were evident (Figure 4). It was decided that this was the appropriate time to take color, temperature and soil moisture measurements. The results shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3 were measured at the three locations on March 28. The plots were minimal and by April 28 could not be seen.

In addition to the results reported in the tables and shown in the figures, significant damage was seen on a portion of some plots at River Falls, on plot overlap areas at St.

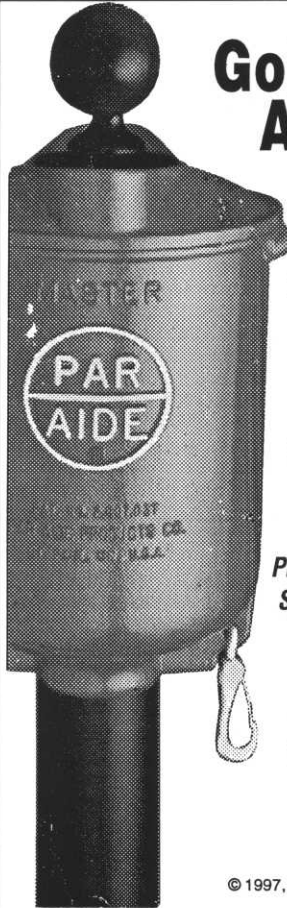


Figure 2. Plots at St. Croix National on December 2, 1997 showing snow melted off plots with darker-colored topdressed sand.

Croix National, and throughout the entire plot area at Indian Hills.

At River Falls, the damage was limited to one end of the plots in an area that appears more poorly-drained than the rest of the green. Damage occurred only on plots with the heavier topdressing treatments and was evident on the fol-

(Continued on Page 9)



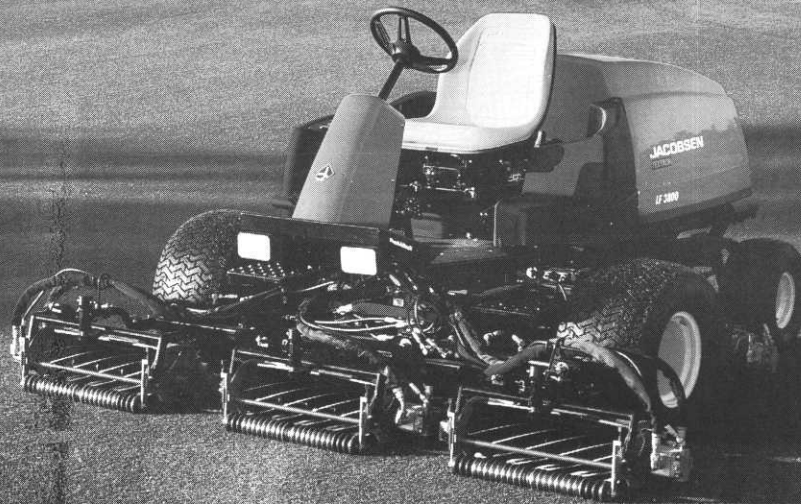
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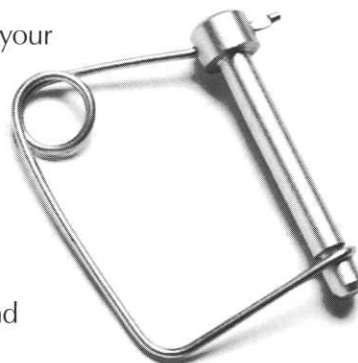


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## Topdressing Results—

(Continued from Page 7)

lowing topdressing treatments in one block silica sand, silica sand/peat, and mortar sand/peat with slight damage to the mortar sand-treated plot. In the other block, there was only slight damage to the heavily-topdressed silica sand and silica sand/peat plots.



Figure 3. Snow had left plots at River Falls Golf Club by February 21, 1998.

At St. Croix National, plot widths were slightly less than the width of the topdressing machine; consequently there was some overlap areas on the edges of plots. Turf damage were limited to overlap areas on the edges of plots and was especially evident where the total sand topdressed was heavier than the 0.18 mm.

At Indian Hills there was turf damage evident throughout the plot area to the point where differences between topdressing treatments were inconsequential. Control plots had damage, though not as severe as topdressed plots. Green area outside the plot area (which received no topdressing) survived through the winter better than the turf on the topdressed plots. Thus, there was a negative impact of topdressing on this green regardless of the sand used or the depth of topdressing.

Since this was such an unusual winter and results varied between the golf courses, it is too early to suggest the results are conclusive and should guide recommendations on late fall topdressings. The results do show that late fall topdressing can affect rate of snow melt, rate of spring green-up, and do influence winter survival and that heavy rates of topdressing can prevent spring growth. Two more years of this project should be invaluable in suggesting the efficacy or danger of late fall topdressing treatments for winter dessication protection.



Figure 4. Plots at River Falls, March 28, 1998, showing differences in early spring green-up.

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# MGCSA Turf Tourney Raises \$6,110 For Research and Education

By **SCOTT TURTINEN**  
Executive Director, MGCSA

Eighteen Minnesota golf clubs and one from Wisconsin opened their courses to help the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association raise \$6,110 for turf research with their 12th annual MGCSA Turf Tourney.

In this competition players get the opportunity to play some private courses they normally don't play. Seventy-six players participated in the competition which ran from June 8-11.

Proceeds will be directed toward various research projects including a top dressing study by Donovan Taylor, primarily focused on how winter and different top dressing material affects various types of turfgrass; Univers-



ity of Minnesota projects involving the study of winter cover and dollar spot and contributions for research by the O.J. Noer Foundation, the Unit-

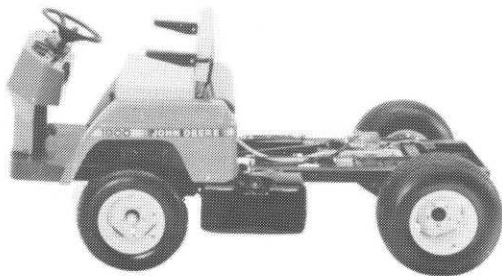
ed States Golf Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Musser Foundation.

"We really appreciate the cooperation of so many golf courses," said MGCSA president Jim Nicol, CGCS, Hazeltine National. "Research done today pays big dividends in the future."

Participating courses this year were Braemar, Dellwood Hills, Edina, Edinburgh, Golden Valley, Hillcrest, Izaty's, Mankato, Mendakota, Midland Hills, Minneapolis, North Oaks, Northland, Southview, Stillwater, The Pines at Grand View Lodge, Wayzata and Woodhill in Minnesota and St. Croix National in Wisconsin.

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