



Turf Times

The newsletter from the Northwest Michigan Turf Managers Association

[1990]

Update

Vol. 1, No. 1

[9]

NMTMA and GAM meeting March 13

The Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association and the Golf Association of Michigan will open the 1990 program and meeting season on March 13th at Hidden Valley Resort in Gaylord.

Date: March 13, 1990

Place: Hidden Valley Resort.

Approximately 4 miles east of I-75 on M-32. The meeting will be held at Hidden Valley's Main Club House.

Program:

Dr. Paul Rieke, MSU

Jim Latham, USGA

Brad Wilkins, Mich. DNR

Tom Drenth, attorney speaking on Employment and Workplace issues

And a film of the 1989 U. S. Open

Program Time: 9:45 a.m. - 2:30p.m.

Registration: 9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Program Cost: \$16.00 payable at the door, including lunch.

IMPORTANT: You must make reservations for the lunch. Call Kim Olson or leave a message to make your reservation. (616) 887-0515.

Send announcements to:

Michael Morris
P.O. Box 1575
Frankfort, MI 49635

IMPORTANT!

Please check the information on your mailing label. Send any immediate or future changes to Tom Reed, 3733 Apollo Dr., Traverse City, MI 49684. All newsletters will be mailed bulk rate: Correct addresses are necessary for delivery, no forwarding.

A short wrapup of the 1989 golf season

By James Latham, Director
Great Lakes Region, USGA Green Section

A recap of the 1989 golf turf season is difficult because it was so varied - from sheer disaster to disappointment to downright delightful, depending upon where you were at the time. It was a year of opportunity for many because of an apparent return to the usual Midwestern climactic patterns and for others because Mother Nature suddenly eradicated *Poa Annua* in places few superintendents would dare to try.

At some time during the winter, golf courses from Michigan to Montana experienced classic winterkill of *Poa Annua* and perennial ryegrass. This phenomenon can be expected locally in almost any year, but seldom has it been so extensive. The greater Chicago area, for example, missed the experience by less than 60 miles, but the six states to the north, east and west were extensively blessed (?) with this cheap *Poa Annua* control process.

It seemed to work this way:

- The soil was frozen.
- There was a thaw and the meltwater was retained at the turf surface (even with sand greens) in depressions, on gentle slopes or even flat spots where *Poa Annua* dominated in the past.
- The temperature dropped suddenly to well below freezing.
- Ice formed in the saturated crown tissue of the bunch grasses and destroyed cell structure.

To make matters even worse for some superintendents, the thin green cover materials **did not** prevent damage. The only escapes in the epicenters of winterkill were greens (etc.) which retained snowcover or those with thick, excelsior mats.

Comments by superintendents who used covers:

- The thin covers may have aggravated the situation by broadening the day/night temperature spread.
- The thick covers probably kept the green surfaces from thawing.
- Medium thickness covers on top of a rather heavy, late topdressing apparently gave enough insulation to prevent surface thaw or refreezing.

This situation was compounded by very poor growing conditions in early spring which defied attempts to reseed. Even *Poa Annua* seed germination was minimal. The superintendents who persevered with multiple reseeding operations now have bentgrass in quantity where it has not been in a long time. By initiating maintenance operations which keep it competitive, they can use *Poa Annua* suppressants to their best advantage. Otherwise, the spring miseries will return to plague them again and again.

Substantial losses of perennial ryegrass occurred in South Dakota and Wisconsin underlining their unreliability as a primary golf turf species in this latitude. They apparently need backup by Kentucky bluegrass, fine fescues or some type of more winter hardy grass.

There are, of course, exceptions to these loss patterns, but they were rare at the courses visited during Turf Advisory Service tours this year. In some instances, I simply confirmed the superintendent's statements that it was impossible to predict the episode and that normal maintenance operations could not prevent this kind of winterkill. It became evident that agronomics must play a larger role in golf turf management so that bentgrass can become more competitive to help *Poa Annua* controls become more effective. Now that we have the means to suppress *Poa Annua* aggressiveness, it is possible to reestablish bentgrass and/or Kentucky bluegrass in key areas, but it is imperative that they compete or the cycle will begin again.

Some other strange events took place this season. The sudden appearance of mini-fairy rings on the greens at a couple of courses was one. At about the same time, similar rings elsewhere disappeared after a couple of years in residence. Why? How?

The black layer syndrome hasn't gone away either. The sporadic rainfall pattern had a great deal to do with this - probably. Soil oxygen is still the key to prevention and cure. Internal drainage and the elimination of spongy organic layers by aeration and topdressing are necessities. And remember that black layers aren't new. O.J. Noer commented on black odorous soil profiles in greens over 50 years ago. They were just harder to see at the time.

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"Represent your organization with class. Nice sport clothes are required for all golf outings - no blue jeans, t-shirts and the like. Sweaters or jackets with ties are recommended for all dinners and meetings. Good golf etiquette, fairness and sportsmanship are expected at all golfing events."

A short wrapup of the 1989 golf season

(Continued from Front Page)

Supplying the anaerobic organisms with oxygen by applying potassium nitrate or similar materials will help to reduce immediate damage, but that is simply treating a contributing factor and not the cause. The cause of black layer in sand, clay, or stratified profiles is usually an excess of water.

The non-capillary (drainage) pores or air spaces are filled with water. Buried thatch becomes a saturated sponge. Layers of anything restrict the downward flow of water which pulls air into the soil after it. And let's not forget that plant roots need oxygen too.

It seems that more clubs are accepting their greens Stimpmeter readings of 8 to 9 feet. A high percentage of the membership are enjoying that speed. There is also the realization that juicing the surfaces up to 11 feet from 9 for a member-guest event destroys the home course advantage. In other words, maybe speed-need is the figment of the imagination of would-be Tour-sites and not the will of the bill-payers.

There are, of course, clubs in which the majority of the members want tournament class greens at all times and are willing to pay for them. That's fine with me as long as they realize that fast greens are, necessarily firm and that fast, firm, greens should be accompanied by fast, firm, fairways and the level of management they require. The bottom line is a golf course that equates 18 very large greens, mown at several heights of cut, but with the same general maintenance procedures throughout. That includes vertical mowing or brushing to minimize the tee toward green grain which comes from cart use on fairways. This applies to both bentgrass and bluegrass. Banning golf carts from the fairways usually destroys the intermediate roughs, so unless these vehicles are limited to roadways, be prepared for higher maintenance costs or lower quality playing conditions. Golf carts are like taxes—we do not like them but we do like the revenues they generate.

Speaking of golf cart traffic, have you noticed the damage being done by the concentrated traffic of maintenance equipment? Some of the wear is in non-play areas, but certainly not all of it.

The traffic problem continues to mount on practice tees, where few golf operations have adequate space. Even fewer can do anything about it except recycle the available area they have. This brings ryegrass to the forefront even though it is no more than temporary turf that will be destroyed in a short time. The best results have been attained by "using up" strips of turf across the width of the tees before moving play to another strip. The damaged strip is then double aerated and the cores broken up, followed by heavy (15-20 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft.) seeding and topdressing or just mixing the seed with the soil from the cores. Rolling and fertilizing finish the job. Fungicide treated seed minimize the danger of damping off until a systemic fungicide can be applied—at about the time of the first mowing.

If you want to turn green with envy, just see the creation at St. Andrew's Golf Course in Chicago, under the care of John Lapp. Acres of bentgrass and ryegrass/bluegrass plus a 30-mat slab for night use. Real greens for targets and real sand in the bunkers. Or look at the Hinsdale Golf Club's band-box practice area which provides such a variety of shots you won't miss using a driver. Bob Maibusch is rightly proud of this unique installation. There are other fine practice ranges throughout the Great Lakes Region but these are tops on their size classes.

A closing thought: if we are to keep bureaucratic regulations off our back, we must make them unnecessary. The way to do this is to stay ahead of the game through safe storage and application of chemicals, employee training and protection and a close look at our own operation as if we were an inspector who had never seen the place before and not issued enough citations recently.

NOTE:

Keep your eyes open for the new Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association's publications. You can expect a Turf Times Update, like this, monthly during our meeting season, and in April you will receive your first Turf Times Quarterly newsletter. The 1990 Membership Directory will be mailed in April.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE:

Assistant Superintendent, irrigation experience preferred, and **Golf Course Mechanic**. Send resume with letter of application to: Mike Meindersma, 1990 U.S. 31 North, Suite #5, Traverse City, MI 49684. (616) 938-9384.

Golf Course Superintendent needed. Written inquiries only to: Tom Baxter, Cadillac Country Club, P.O. Box 367, Cadillac, MI 49601.

Advertisers!

There is still some advertising space available in all of our publications! Make your reservation soon.

"Thanks for your support of the NMTMA."

Northern Michigan Turf Managers Association
C/O Mike Morris, P.O. Box 1575
Frankfort, MI 49635

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