



GREEN SECTION RECORD



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Surviving An Uncertain Future

Managing a bankrupt golf course back to life can be the ride of a life

By Clay Pedigo, superintendent, The Tradition Golf Club at Oak Lane, Woodbridge, Conn.

Editor's note: At the completion of this article in late 2011, The Tradition At Oak Lane's future was still in doubt...On January 3rd a special permit for the facility was granted by the Town Planning and Zoning Board which allowed for the sale of the property to be complete. The Tradition at Oak Lane has become reality.

I didn't think things could get any worse than September 28, 2010. I found out that day that my employer, Oak Lane Golf and Country Club in Woodbridge, Connecticut, would be closing its doors indefinitely on November 1st and I was losing my job a month later.

It was the end of my fourth season as superintendent of the club, and it capped off a demoralizing year for everyone involved. During the previous 12 months the club had shut down its kitchen operation in favor of hiring an outside caterer, had been through three general managers, and had reduced the green department operating budget by 33 percent. To make matters worse, a severe drought and state mandated water restrictions left most of the fairways decimated from lack of irrigation. Morale, from club members to staff, was very low from the cloud of uncertainty that had hung over us during this time. Members were already searching for new clubs to join, and staff members were forced to deal with early layoffs and no confirmed return dates.

Adding to my anxiety was the weight of losing my job and with it a salary, company vehicle, my family's health insurance (wife and three young children) and the house provided to us. The club's board of governors informed us we were welcome to continue living in the house while the future of the club and property was being determined, but we always knew there was a chance that we would be forced to leave. For the next two months, I frequently transitioned between feelings of anger, frustration, fear, denial, and disbelief. I was experiencing these feelings while still working full time, navigating through the fall leaf season, and preparing the course for a New England winter.

But the worst was not yet over.

[Read the rest of this article](#)



A sign of the times. An early May auction prolonged the existence of the golf course at Oak Lane G&CC.

All Things Considered - A Green Section Staff Opinion

There is a lot to be said about a "can-do" attitude

By [Keith A. Happ](#), senior agronomist, Mid-Atlantic Region

You have heard it many times: "Attitude is everything." How you approach your day, your job, and your career makes a statement. A positive, can-do attitude is often contagious and can motivate the people around you.

How do you respond when faced with challenges? For example, when you no longer have the resources to conduct a specific maintenance practice in the manner in which you prefer, do you search for a solution or simply focus on what cannot be accomplished? Do you propose compromise or even consider adjustments, allowing for the continuation of an abbreviated form of a past practice? When labor is no longer available for walk-mowing greens and tees, is a proposal developed to employ a combination of tactics to maintain these areas to the best conditions possible? Or, if certain areas of the course are exhibiting wear from current practices, do you look for solutions within the current budget or simply dismiss change because it is easier to focus on what cannot be done? Having an attitude that focuses on what cannot be attempted, rather than what is possible, becomes tiring and results in little progress toward achieving the goals put forth for improvement.



It may not be possible to mow all the greens by hand, but during stressful environmental conditions, walkmowing with lightweight machines, even if only on a few greens, will make a difference over the long term.

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Regional Updates



Florida Region

By [Todd Lowe](#), senior agronomist

Tree Roots, Underground Menaces

The 2011 summer and fall saw significant rainfall in Florida followed by drier conditions. As such, isolated turf stress from nematodes and tree root competition has been observed on recent Turfgrass Advisory Service visits.

Trees are important features on golf courses as they add beauty, provide food and shelter for wildlife and impact golf course strategy and playability. However, trees also negatively affect turf health as they compete with turfgrass for sunlight, water and nutrients. Some trees, like live oaks, produce extensive shallow root systems that aggressively compete with turf for water. Such trees can literally suck the life out of adjacent turf and create brown, droughty conditions - a fact that is often missed when golf course managers focus on shade issues alone.

Tree limbs are pruned on a regular basis to improve turf health and golf course aesthetics. However, few courses prune tree roots. Root pruning is recommended for shallow-rooted trees at least every other year. Trees produce new roots that eventually stress the surrounding turf, so it is necessary to prune tree roots regularly to maintain good turf quality.



While this area receives additional stress from cart traffic, tree roots are literally sucking the life out of the adjacent bermudagrass.

Ideal pruning depth is at least 12 inches, as bermudagrass seldom produces deeper roots. How close to the tree should you root prune?

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North Central Region

By [R.A. \(Bob\) Brame](#), director

Onward And Upward In 2012



How long is your list?

The milder winter weather pattern has allowed projects to be extended longer than expected. For courses in the southern portion of the region, routine maintenance like mowing putting greens also has continued into December. It will be interesting to see if the milder pattern stays in place as predicted. Agronomically, it is always better to plan for harsh conditions as opposed to needing milder weather to make it through the season.

New Year's resolutions are guiding the day, and no doubt some have already broken or discarded their resolve and moved on. Yet, reflecting on the past to enhance the future can be a worthwhile process. What worked in 2011? What didn't work and needs to be adjusted? Will we see a more pronounced upswing in rounds being played? Will there be more funds available for course maintenance? The golf turf maintenance industry continues to be impacted by multiple variables, not the least of which is an ongoing tough economy. This serves to underline the importance of prioritization, which is directly tied to formal

maintenance standards that have been established and agreed upon by all of the decision makers. Adjustments can then be made, when needed, with much less chance of compromising agronomic sustainability.

On a more personal note, the following are worth reviewing as we move into 2012.

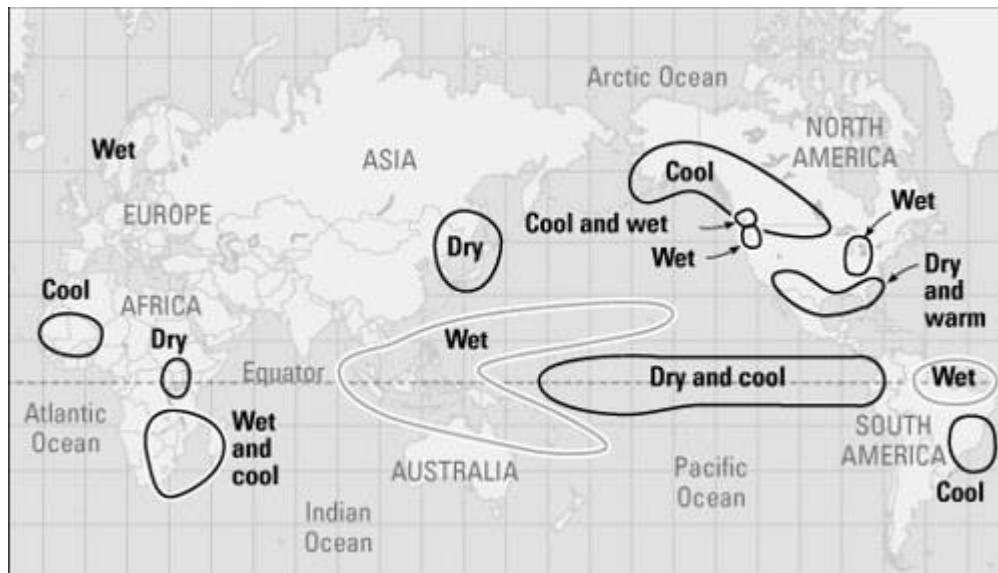
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Southeast Region

By [Patrick O'Brien](#), director

La Nina With A Twist Of Arctic Oscillation



Although the 2011-2012 winter is only a few weeks old, we are noticing some favorable regional weather patterns. The meteorologists tell us we are in a La Nina pattern. La what? La Nina is a weather pattern characterized by cooling of the ocean waters in the central Pacific Ocean. These cooler ocean waters actually influence weather here in the Southeast. In a La Nina winter we can expect temperatures to be above average and drier than normal. Figure 1 shows general patterns for La Nina winters. The good news is that warmer and drier conditions promote more play and help courses generate more revenue in these slower times of year.

You will notice that when we discuss La Nina, we use the term *on average*. Sometimes there is a short-term weather pattern called an Arctic oscillation that takes over and causes the mercury to plummet in the Southeast. This occurred on January 2 - 4 when nighttime temperatures went down as low as the upper teens and daytime highs stayed in the 30s and low 40s for many Southern cities. Anytime Arctic and golf are mentioned in the same sentence, it's not going to be good for golf. Cold weather keeps away all but the most avid players and less revenue is generated.

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By the USGA Green Section Staff

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USGA Green Section
P.O. Box 708
Far Hills, NJ 07931-0708
908.234.2300



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