



1987: The Season in Review

Each golf season challenges the golf course superintendent with another set of surprises, crises, and problems to attend to. The Green Section staff has spent the year visiting more than 1,250 golf courses in all parts of the country, and has highlighted the season in the following pages.

The major concerns in 1987? You guessed it . . . **Heat and Water Problems!**



Mid-Atlantic Region

by STANLEY J. ZONTEK, Director

THE BIG STORY in the Mid-Atlantic Region this season was the turf problems associated with the heat and humidity that came early and stayed right through the summer.

A common occurrence this year was the loss of turf on greens located in shaded areas or in pockets with poor air circulation. Greens located even a few yards away, out in the sun and in areas with better air circulation, suffered far less. Common sense and good agronomics suggest this is more than a coincidence. The obvious solution is painful but necessary — to solve these problems the trees need to be removed and underbrush cleared.

Another problem this year was the loss of grass to burns from chemicals normally considered safe. Stressed grass is tender grass, and when heat and humidity combine with other stresses, grass can be lost. Overlapping on greens with common fungicides completely killed the turf in some cases.

On the other hand, warm-season grasses like bermudagrasses and zoysiagrasses grow their best when it is hot. This summer was hot, and these grasses performed beautifully. In fact, a number of courses in the Washington, D.C., area that formerly had only patches of ber-



Pythium — a common occurrence in the summer of 1987.

mudagrass in predominantly perennial ryegrass fairways now have practically a solid stand of bermudagrass, with the perennial ryes literally being choked out. This shift in the turfgrass population is just another illustration of how grasses respond to the weather.

If there is a positive aspect to the type of weather experienced in 1987, it is that whatever strengths or weaknesses existed on golf courses, they were clearly seen. If a better fungicide spray program was needed, next season will be a good time to begin. If an irrigation problem existed, there is time over the winter and next spring to solve it. There is even time to renovate this fall to replace the grass that was lost.

Finally, the sobering fact remains that even as good as our industry has become technically, and with the grasses and tools available to us, turf managers still must work with the weather. Nevertheless, by solving the grass-growing problems identified this summer, the turf manager and his course should be in a better position next season to manage the grass for an enjoyable season with a healthy stand of turf. This was a lesson learned this summer in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Green Section.