



Chicago District Golf Association Scouting Report 12-7-14

Its here – hot off the presses and the final installment of another year of intrepid detail and willful misinformation! As I write this I realize that we certainly seem to have gotten off lightly so far this winter. Looking at a lot of brown grass this week has allayed my mild concern regarding whether or not turf had hardened off appropriately to the cold temperatures. That however has changed and many of the courses are now looking appropriately brown. Unfortunately some damage has occurred during the cold snap which will be seen all the way into late April of next year.

Conference season is in full swing as well as a spat of annual meetings for the various association – further to that, the CDGA Club Leadership Conference is upcoming and our session for prospective greens chairmen and superintendents has some very interesting topics in regards to the role of a greens chairman, water issues facing golf courses and course changes in relation to re-grassing, redesigns are all on the slate for discussion on February 21st at Medinah CC. Guest speakers will be in place from the USGA, GCSAA as well as presenters who have had recent experience on some of the mentioned topics.

As it is the last scouting report of the season, it would be poor of me not to remind you of the education opportunities coming up – OTF next week <http://www.ohioturfgrass.org/page/14OTFOSU/>, Wisconsin Turfgrass Research Day, Jan 6th <http://www.wisconsinturfgrassassociation.org/turfgrassresearchday.html> ITF January 13-14th <http://www.illinoisturfgrassfoundation.org/>, MTF <http://mtfconference.org/>, and of course GIS in San Antonio February 21-26. These are all great opportunities – avail of them. Online opportunities at the Great Lakes Turf School are also available here <http://turf.umn.edu/2014/11/educational-opportunity-2015-great-lakes-school-turfgrass-science-online-professionals-january-7th-march-25th-2015/>

One last note is to thank you for your support this year and as always happy holidays – whichever way you celebrate it!

Climate:

The year ended up about 5” above average for precipitation totals but the nature of it was what caused us some heartache this year. Despite precipitation measurement being average or a little below average for the winter months, the fact it turned to ice caused a mark that will last long in the memory of many superintendents. The precipitation stayed somewhat around average through April and then May and June got a little out of control with close on 4” plus on normal rainfall. July was an excellent month and based on conversations with courses and superintendents, July probably saved a majority of courses from a very poor year – temperatures were excellent and conditions dried out somewhat. Further to that precipitation through July had been consistent with some decent spacing between events and consistent desirable wetting of the soil profile which is desirable. That also meant that disease issues were not hugely pressing which would occur with downpours followed by standing water.

This changed in late August when tropical type rain fell followed by some heat which triggered issues and also showed us that many turf canopies were still affected from the winter as damage began to show up – luckily we didn’t see this heat in June – it would have made for a long summer (Figure 1). September dried out and then October did become very wet and left some sloppy conditions to hurt fall golf somewhat. The drying conditions returned in November and the forecast is not for any upcoming deluges and heavy precipitation going into winter. In general not a horrific year but there certainly was plenty of bunkers to be pushed up along with avoiding any scald or serious pythium issues other than the 20th – 26th of August. The added benefit is that combined with the winter, the extra precipitation meant that grub activity tended to be somewhat mitigated as soils were more evenly wetted through.

The only current concern is based on the forecast. Temperatures are predicted to hit the 50°F mark in the next 10 days. This is getting to a number that may trigger some *Poa annua* and so checking for a return of green color will be important.

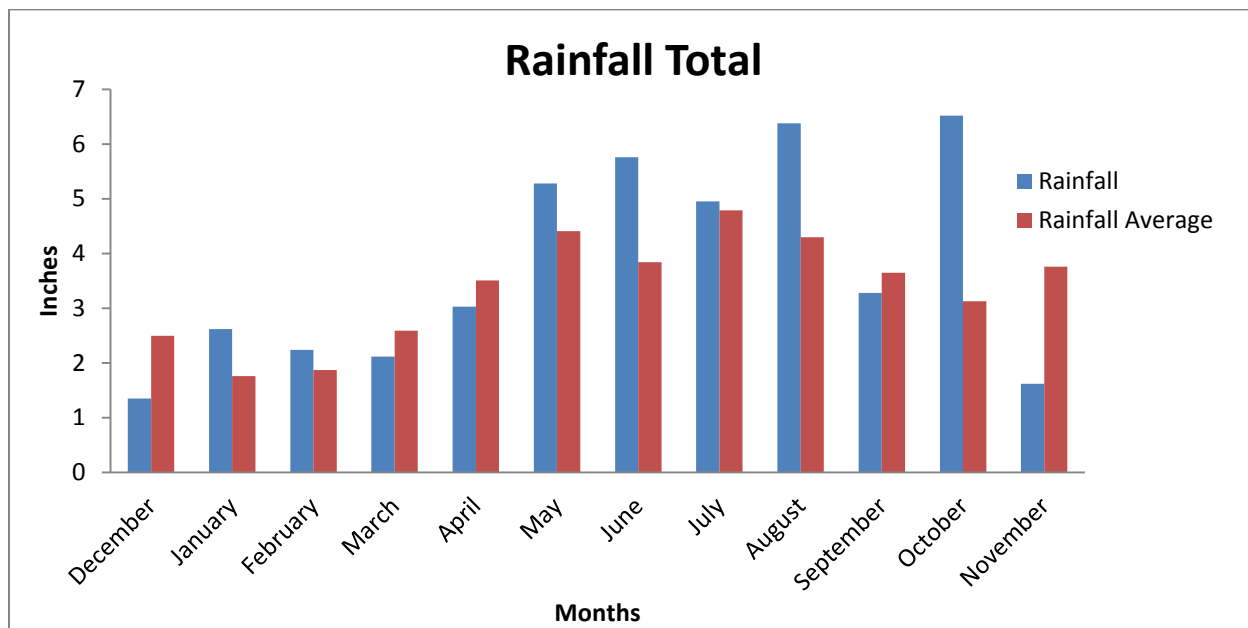


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation at Midwest Golf House, Lemont IL (Southwest Chicago Suburb) December 2013 through November 2014 compared to 30 year average monthly totals.

Temperatures as mentioned last week were on the cold to cool side of normal. Undoubtedly the winter was extreme with a vast majority of daily highs and lows below their 30 year averages. The summer never warmed up completely which combined with the abundance of moisture meant it was a pretty salient summer for growing *Poa annua* for the most part. It was not as good a summer to get bentgrass aggressively growing but the lack of winter damage on bentgrass meant that a majority of courses were still in excellent playing condition on bentgrass surfaces. The only true burst of heat we experienced occurred in the latter part of the summer and it did cause some problems but fortunately we were almost completely through the golfing season and the conditions calmed after this to allow for a good September and October to finish the season (Figure 2). Courses in central Illinois also really benefitted from an excellent finish to the season and many courses have remarked that despite such a chaotic start to the season that total rounds have been up.

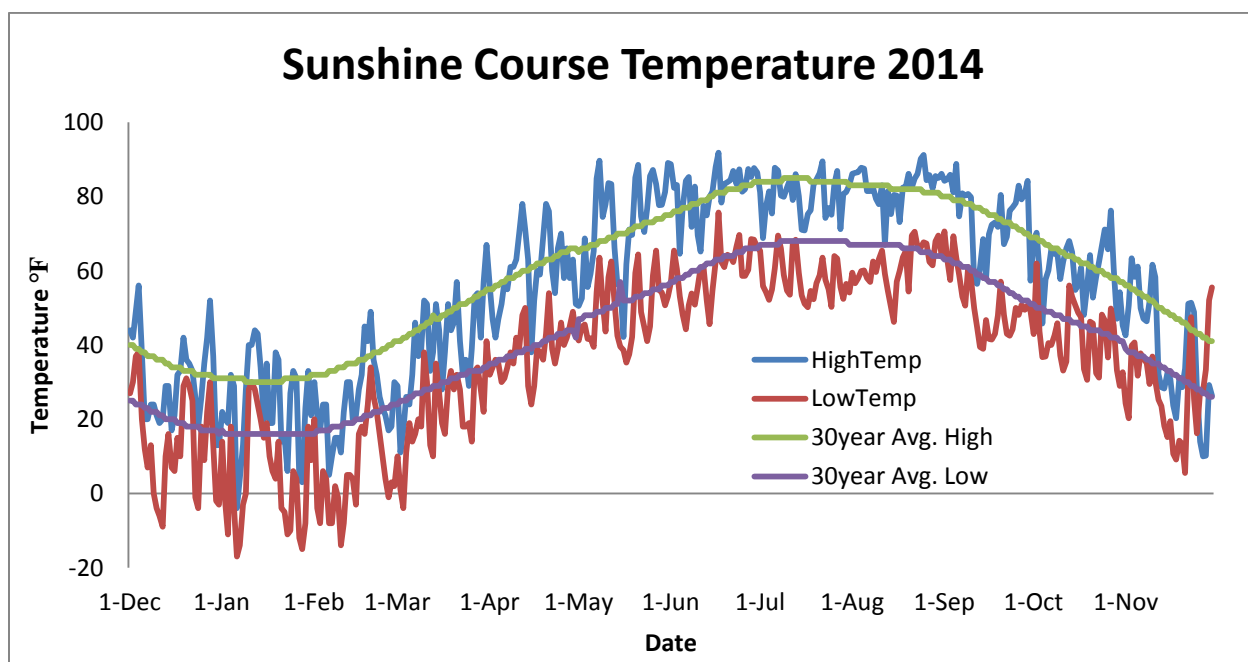


Figure 2. Daily high and low temperatures at Midwest Golf House, Lemont IL (Southwest Chicago Suburb) December 2013 through November 2014 compared to thirty year averages.

Further northwest conditions were not as wet as what we saw in the Chicago area and in fact ended just shy of the average. The area did suffer some of the same fate as Chicago with heavy tropical downpours in June which put the number about 3" above normal for that month (Figure 3). The month of July however dried out again in the area and similar rain to Chicago fell in August. Once again the fall dried out and conditions currently seem to be in great shape for the upcoming winter.

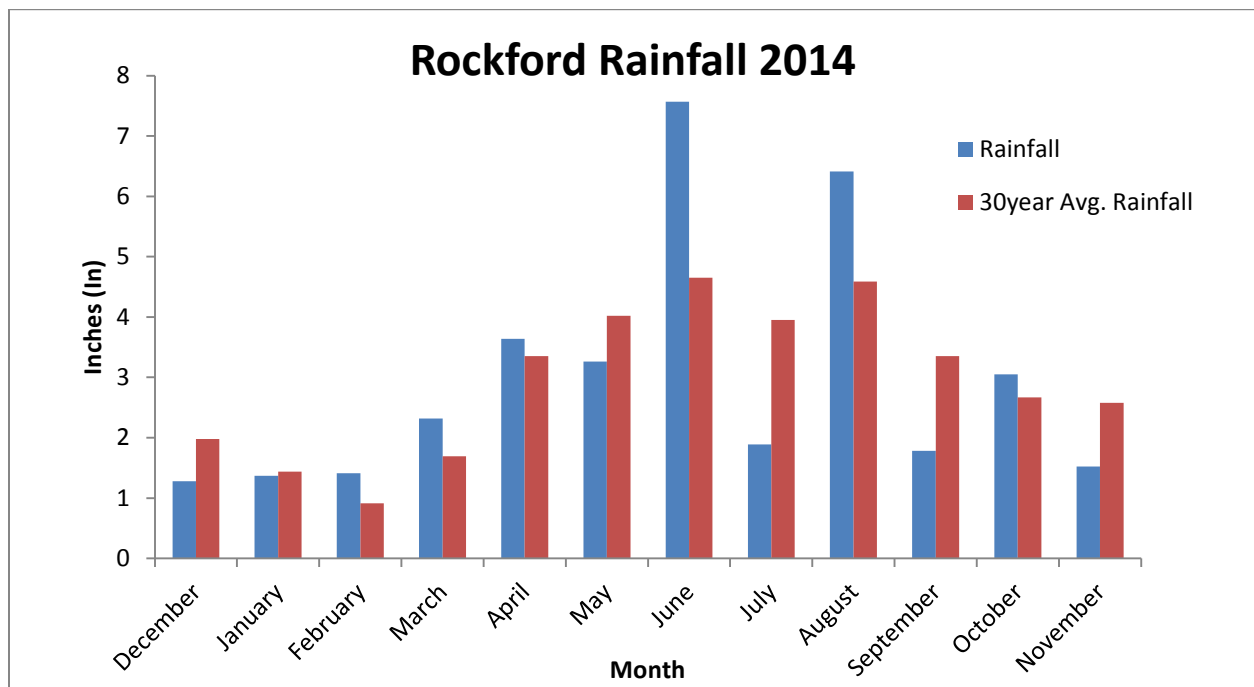


Figure 3. Monthly precipitation totals for Rockford CC, Rockford, IL December 2013 through November 2014 compared to 30 year average monthly totals.

Temperatures in Rockford followed a similar pattern to those in Chicago. There was one difference however in the area; measured temperatures only scraped above the 90°F mark one time all summer (Figure 4), which is definitely not a bad thing! Winter temperatures were possibly somewhat colder and it may have helped to reduce some of the damage that was noted in the Chicago area – not to say there was no winter damage in the northwest – it did not seem to be as widespread. The area did see a colder fall snap but currently conditions seem to be excellent heading into winter.

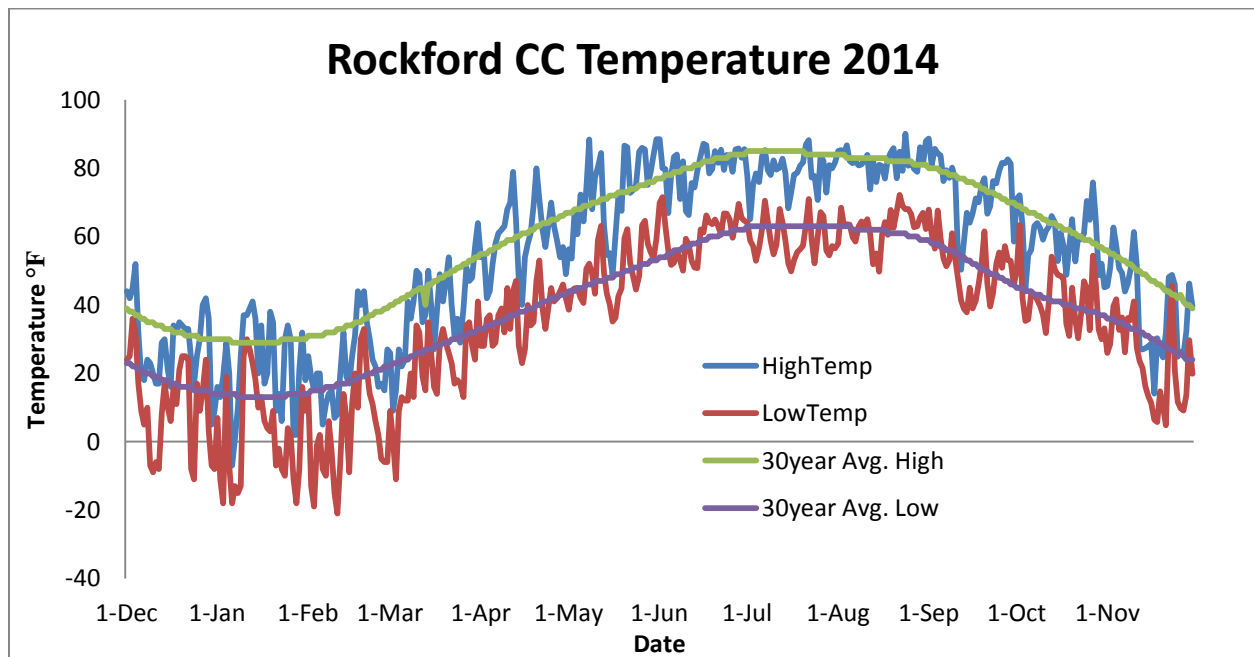


Figure 4. Daily high and low temperatures for Rockford CC, Rockford, IL December 2013 through November 2014 compared to 30 year compared to thirty year averages.

In the southern part of the state, growing different grass types resulted in some bigger and longer term problems. Temperatures certainly did not drop down as low as Chicago or northwestern Illinois but temperatures of -2°F will hurt common and older types of bermudagrass from direct temperature kill (Figure 5). The zoysiagrass seems to have gotten through the winter temperatures in better shape and may need to be given further consideration going forward in the area. Following the extreme cold in the area, the summer never truly heated up to push bermudagrass growth and recovery. A majority of courses were good but it was difficult to produce excellent. The weather was however good for golf activity but courses will not see a return to full cover until

May-June of next year when air and soil temperatures combined with hopefully a nicer winter will lead to more aggressive growing bermudagrass in particular (Figure 5).

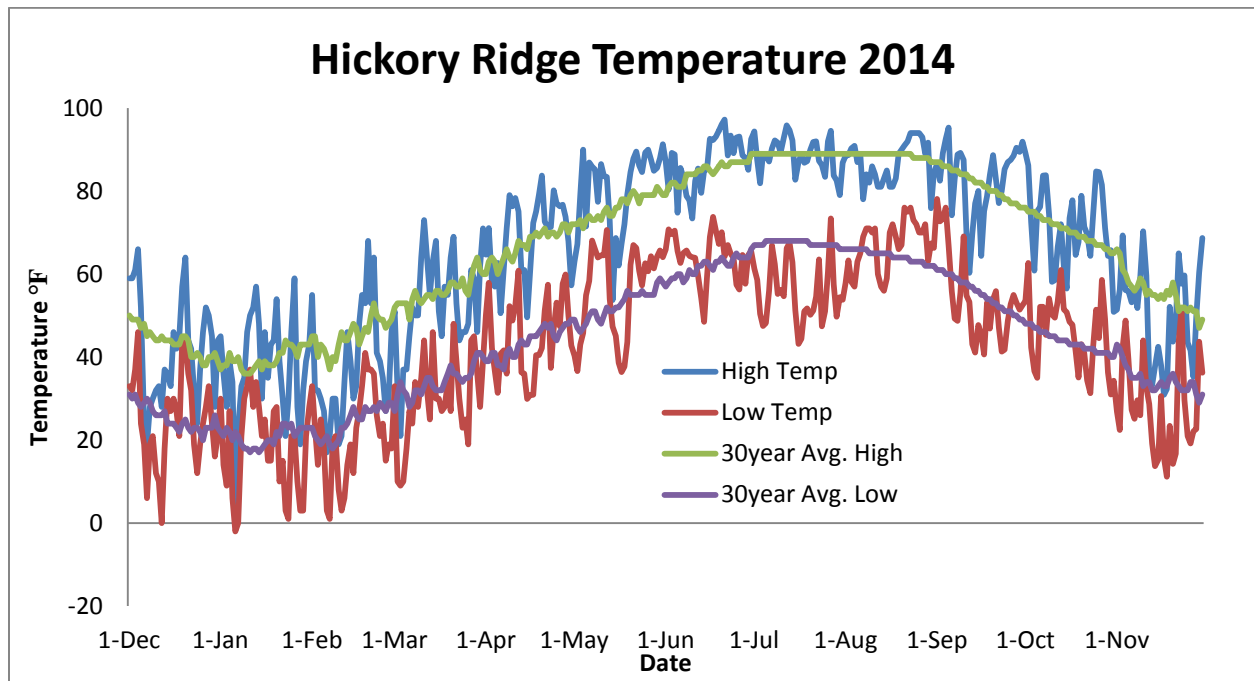


Figure 5. Daily high and low temperatures for Hickory Ridge GC, Carbondale, IL December 2013 through November 2014 compared to thirty year averages for Carbondale IL.

Precipitation totals in the Southern part of the state were far off the average number. Other than the month of April, totals were below average all the way through the season (Figure 6). The difference in April was not sufficient to make up for the rest of the season and in total for the measured dates the area is 10" behind average. This may have helped reduce some disease pressure – the lack of moisture would have been favorable to reducing disease movement. It did not help however where courses were trying to regrow areas that had lost grass cover and needed the moisture rather than trying use irrigation water that might not offer the same quality.

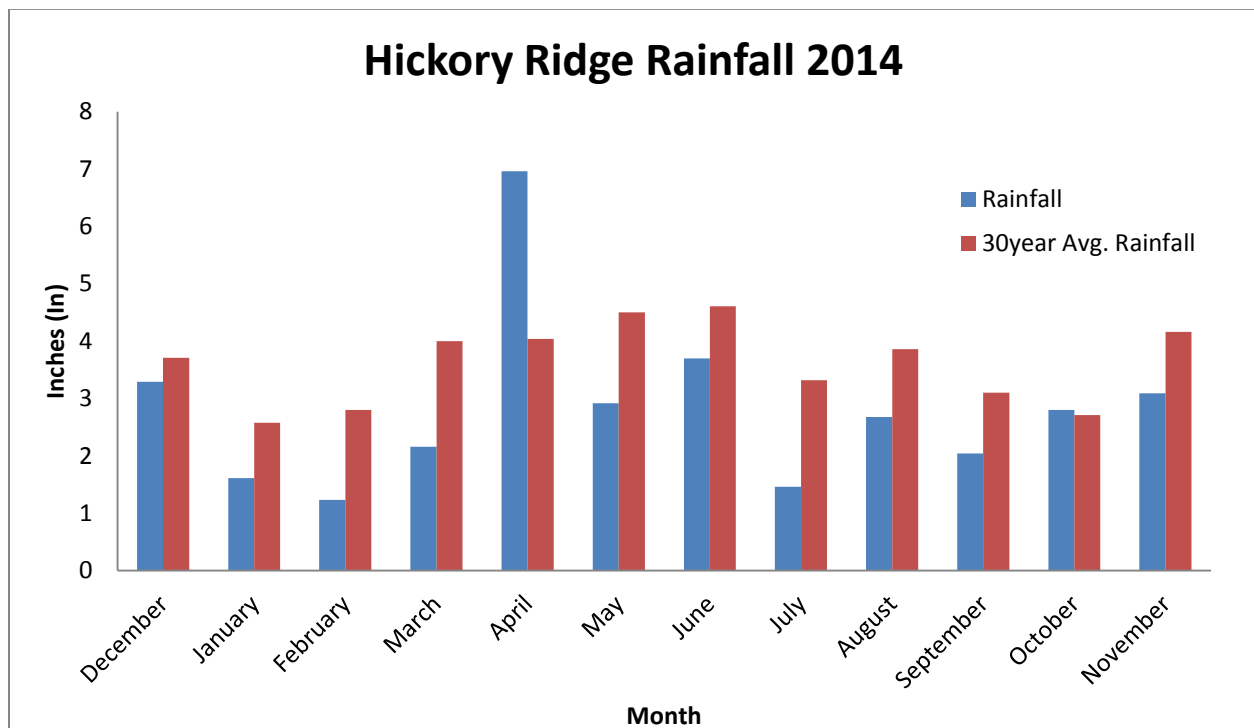


Figure 6. Monthly precipitation totals for Hickory Ridge GC, Carbondale, IL December 2013 through November 2014 compared to 30 year average monthly totals for Carbon Dale.

Disease:

While no activity has been reported – I suspect we will see some snow mold / *Microdochium* activity over the next couple of weeks, temperatures are forecast somewhere in the correct range while the moisture levels should rise appropriately to give rise to the disease triangle having all three components in place to create some pressure on dormant turf.

Insects:

No activity reported and nothing to be expected until next year.

Weeds:

Fall applications will have finally finished off any weed problems and a clean spring can be expected.

FINALLY!!!!

Note must be made of the announcement of retirement by Mr Alan T. Fierst from Oak Park Country Club. In my short time here in Chicago I have to say he is a superintendent that has left an indelible mark on my mindset in regards to golf course management. Al had an understated style, but a steely determination combined with an excellent booming voice to get his ideas across – his passion after 37 years was unrelenting as well as admirable and all I can say is best wishes and that Oak Park CC will have to find one pretty big set of boots to replace you!

Dr. Lee Miller's latest report dated 12-05-14 can be found below.



http://turfpath.missouri.edu/reports/update12_05_14.cfm

As always if you have a question or query please do not hesitate to ask, and you can call or email.

The calendars are in process and if you didn't get one last year please let us know.

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Finally – we would like to thank all sponsors and vendors who helped us out this year. Renny Jacobsen, Chicagoland Turf, Arthur Clesens, ProGro Solutions, Reinders, BTSI, John Turner, Brian Winkel, Randy Lusher, Erik Spong, Kerry Anderson, Jeff Mazur, Jeff Leuzinger – I believe that's all the bases covered – if not we are still very grateful for the support the Sunshine course needs the help of the industry to allow Chris Painter and Nikki Munroe do their job.