

## **This Season Unprecedentedly Sucks**

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In many cases, a diagnostic analysis and microscopic scan can't absolve the weather cards this region has been dealt... seven-two off suit and in for the big blind. Likewise, magical elixirs from sprayer boom nozzles don't alter the growing environment or provide instant recovery. The fact of the matter is that European born bentgrass prefers 55 – 75 F, which was nowhere to be found in spring 2018. The second coldest April, followed by the warmest May on record is one of the biggest anomalies on record in Missouri, with the last one in back to back months occurring in a cold December 1989 and warm January 1990. Those growing grass then, did you care? Probably not, since you probably didn't even need to mow it. June did what June does, providing another blow and ringing in as 6<sup>th</sup> warmest on record.

Spring, not winter, is the time to put money in the bank with bentgrass root growth and structure to get through the summer marathon. Also, recall last fall. The lack of rainfall had many recharging irrigation systems to get through Thanksgiving and supply bentgrass roots with enough water to get past old, dry, and cold man winter. Bentgrass putting green root systems, the fibrous source of quality golf in Missouri, have not had consistently good growing conditions since spring 2017.

If misery loves company, know that 59 samples have been submitted to MU since June 1. For perspective, 4-6 samples on average are processed per week, meaning twice that have been submitted in the last six weeks. Other than physiological decline, lance nematodes, Pythium root rot, and black layer are most often observed this year as being the primary or contributing factor to bentgrass decline. Prevent root diseases, manage water in the root zone precisely, and don't get rough with the surface (no verticutting, smooth rollers, roll instead of mowing if possible, etc.).

“Survive and Advance” is an ESPN “30 for 30” production about the magical run of Jim Valvano's NC State Wolfpack team. I graduated from NC State so hold that team and its underdog nature in the highest of regards. While Coach Valvano is perhaps best known for his bravery and selflessness in the face of cancer, he also led that 1983 team of young men through nine elimination games in a row, seven of which they were losing in the last minute (hence the moniker “Cardiac Pack”). Not to be overly dramatic, but the individual bentgrass plants on your putting greens are that team this year. Weather in this upper transition zone is always challenging, but this year it's like playing against Phi Slama Jama.

Let me know if I can help. Hang in there. Support each other.