



# *The MEAN Season*

*Record summer rainfall and a nasty hurricane season kept many fairways like this under water too long to survive. Recovery will require time and understanding.*

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

**W**ell, it's December 1st and the 1995 Hurricane Season is officially over. From Allison to Tanya, 19 named storms caused an estimated \$9.2 billion in damage to the United States. In Florida, we had another record breaking rainfall year and we felt the wrath of hurricanes Allison, Erin and Opal, and tropical storm Jerry.

Across the state, inundated golf courses and clubhouses were just a side bar to the stories of inaccessible neighborhoods and flooded communities. Cleaning up and restoring normal conditions to those areas will take hard work and patience.

The same is true for all the affected golf courses as we dealt with power outages, downed trees, erosion, silt deposits on the turf, continuously saturated root zones and flooded maintenance buildings.

Jeff Babineau, a sportswriter for The Orlando Sentinel, gets an "atta boy" for his article, "Rain puts a damper on local

golf." Several key points were made that the golfing public needed to hear:

- ".....the inclement weather has delayed the normal overseeding process that helps a golf course transition into the winter months..."

- "It wasn't fun to be closed....but the course was so soaked it just made no sense to be open."

- ".....a wet golf course is vulnerable to damage by golf cart traffic.....deep tough-to-repair marks left in the soft sod."

- "The ground is so full of water the grass just starts to shut down...."

- "We're making the best of a problem that is really Mother Nature's."

- "The effect of all this rain can be devastating.....what can you do except hope it stops raining. A sentiment that renders a man - and a golf course - rather helpless."

Meanwhile, in a twist of irony, golf courses in the north and east were fighting just the opposite problem as record heat and drought turned their summer upside down.

Our courses were flooding and float-

ing away while there's were drying up and blowing away. Articles written by the USGA appeared in association newsletters, *Golf Journal* magazine and local newspapers to answer the complaints of poor course conditions.

My favorite piece comes from the Greater Cincinnati GCSA. It has a lot of common sense that applies to course conditions everywhere. The italics are mine:

## **On The Road With The USGA**

*by Bob Brame, North Central Region*

The harsh summer weather has left its mark on most operations. Nevertheless, a few courses have come through with minimal scars.

These are the courses golfers sometimes latch onto and say, "Gee, Truegreen C.C. (just down the street) looks good. The subtle question being, "Why doesn't this course?" "What happened here?" Such questions are not always easy to answer. Let's think about it.

*First of all, every golf course is different. Golf courses can no more be accurately compared than you and I. Just like people*





Flood waters caused erosion like this to greens and fairways bordering usually benign lakes, ponds and canals.

have similarities, so do courses. However, the other side is equally true. You could say (although discretion is important here), "Mr. Chairman, have you noticed Mr. Jones is tall and thin? Why aren't you?" "Ms. Smith has a 2 handicap; why don't you?"

The foundational components that determine how a course will come through difficult weather are normally complex and hidden.

*Superficial comparisons almost always over simplify the facts.*

Golf turf management is a business/career for the superintendent, but most course officials (private clubs) approach it differently.

*Normally, course conditioning for the non-paid official is on an emotional level. Bragging rights and pride are part of the equation*

Sometimes this emotional approach from course officials, is subconscious. It is very important to stick with the facts when discussing why turf loss occurred and recognize the fact that you (the superintendent), are coming from



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a different perspective than the chairperson and/or course official. Don't argue. Don't personalize it. Be professional even in the face of emotional comments. *Positive communication always has been tougher than agronomics.* When reviewing the agronomics, of the 1995 summer season, start with the big four:

1. Grass Growing Environment
  - sunlight (especially early morning hours)
  - air movement
2. Mowing Height (bench setting, equipment & blade sharpness)
3. Fertility
4. Water Management
  - drainage (aerification)
  - irrigation capabilities

Limitations with one or more of these building blocks, allowed the harsh weather patterns to be more destructive. Water management looms as the single biggest weakness for many.

Ultra fast green speeds and low mowing heights was a close second. Now is the time to regroup, recover, review weaknesses and plan for 1996.

Golf is a game played *with* (not against) Mother Nature. Sometimes she scores better than others. Isn't that part of the attraction we all have for this game? Remember, grass is a renewable resource.

...

Finally, as an antidote for "The Mean Season" I offer the following piece which I received from the folks at TurfNet Associates, Inc.

It will be my greeting card for the holidays. It expresses sentiments I think we could all stand to live by. Take care one and all until we meet again!

## Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant: they too have their own story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others you may become vain and bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your own achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble. It is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But, let this not blind you to what virtue there is: many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love, for in the face of all aridity it is perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. but do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline be gentle to yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars. You have a right to be here. And, whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be, and whatever your aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery & broken dreams,  
it is still a beautiful world.

Strive to be happy.

written by Max Ehrmann

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