Recovering from Hugo

Hurricane struck Carolina courses in random fashion

By TOMMY BRASWELL

With Staff Reports

Some greenskeeping and tree-company crews in the Carolinas continue to clean up golf courses that, in the wake of Hurricane Hugo's 135-mph winds, looked like giant game of Pick Up Sticks.

Of the $4 billion trail of destruction Hurricane Hugo left as it hammered the region from Charleston, S.C., to Charlotte, N.C., on Sept. 21, millions of dollars of damage were done to golf courses.

Courses from Charleston to the Grand Strand as well as some 200 miles inland were closed — for days, weeks, months, and some for as long as a year — because of the devastation.

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Europe opens arms to golf experts

By JAN BELJAN

Countries from Spain to The Netherlands and from Sweden to the United Kingdom are hoping to go "golf crazy," yet are engulfed in the same mass of red tape that faces golf course builders in the United States, according to experts speaking at Golf Course Europe '89. The exhibition and conference in Wiesbaden, West Germany, in October drew some of the top names in the golf industry from around the globe, and in concert they agreed the opportunities in Europe are great.

"There is a pent-up demand for golf in Europe," said Michael Redd, president of Team Plan, Inc., in Florida. "The... American professionals are great, but along with them come some constraints — elaborate language, time, working conditions..."

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Supers' needs foster inventions

By PETER BLAIS

A Florida company has developed a long-sought solution to the problem of fairway grass encroaching into greens and tees.

Boca Raton-based DomiTrimmer Inc. has installed the $50,000 system on an experimental basis on four Southern courses.

Despite the hefty price tag, company officials claim Greens Encroachment will pay for itself in labor savings within two years.

"It will really be a big thing for the golf course industry in the coming years. It's something we've needed very badly and should become very popular," said Wilmington (Del.) Country Club's Paul Latshaw, one of the country's best-known superintendents.

The Greens Encroachment product is the brainchild and the latest in a string of labor-saving turf

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working conditions, expectations, money, et cetera." Experts in ecology, environmental and hazardous-waste safeguards, governmental regulations and turfgrass management agreed about the constraints. Yet there is no mistaking that the demand for more courses spans the continent.

Howard Swan, chairman of the National Turfgrass Council in England and founder of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, said the English Golf Union, which controls and administers the game in that country, predicts that 675 courses are needed to sustain the present demand, "let alone to satisfy it in the years to come."

"This, in all, with the fact that we have around 2,000 in the United Kingdom already in operation," Swan said.

L. Poignant, reporting on the state of golf in Sweden, said, "Almost all clubs have long queues with people who want to become members. Clubs usually set a limit of 1,000 members per 18-hole course. Time for waiting can, in some places, be up to 10 years ... even longer."

H. Chesneau, general manager of the French Golf Federation, reported that golfers in France numbered 43,613 in 1979 and today surpass 155,000. He said 134 courses are in planning or under construction in France.

Mr. Libor of the German Golf Federation said a 10-percent per-year increase in construction of 18-hole courses through 1999 "seems realistic."

Spain, said Mr. Lambao, witnessed growth rates exceeding 12 percent per year from 1985 through 1988 and "to keep the number of players by golf course in the year 2000 it is necessary to inaugurate 23 to 27 courses a year."

S. Dhondt reported that in Belgium the number of players has quadrupled in the last nine years. And J.K. Kokke said golf in The Netherlands is "as promising, as rapidly developing ... as in other European countries."

European and American developers at the conference said the shadow of complicated permitting processes hovers over the expectations of the golf boom. And how those processes are handled today will affect the game in the future.

"You get volume up for buildability through credibility of previous projects," said English developer Nigel Smith.

In the U.S., land planner Ed Stone said, "What is happening now is an incubator for opportunities in golf."

"Agreat handicap in this country is the enormous and complicated test of permits," said West Germany's Libor. "If you are fast like a champion you may be successful after two years."

Nevertheless, Dave Stubbs of The Golf Course Wildlife Trust in London held up hope for the marriage of golf and ecology. "We consider this being at the threshold of one of the great opportunities of our age, and this realization was the principal motivation behind establishing (GOLF"), he said. "Golf, with its requirement for relatively sizeable tracts of land, has enormous potential for working in partnership with conservation to achieve a more sustainable and stable environment..."

The missing ingredient in the boom, at least in Continental Europe, is the expertise to deal with developing golf courses and the real-estate around them.

Team Plan's Redd said Europeans are buying America's professional talent, "be it marketing, master planning or management. Most of the golf course architects doing work in Europe are Americans and they have been designing European courses for some time. Europeans are also looking to us for planning expertise."

Redd said, "Europe doesn't really have a stable of land developers, vis-a-vis the United States. In many cases the government will build the housing. Larger companies are now opening real-estate branches."

"Southern Europe, compared with the rest of the continent, is a quantum leap ahead in development and building. The Costa del Sol makes a typical American building boom look stagnant. And golf course resorts are a big part of this activity."

Stone said the golf-related developments in Europe will be different than in the United States in some ways, however. Said Europe is more-family-oriented and some Europeans spend one or two weeks for a golf trip whereas Americans more often take long weekends.

"He said he hopes that in the rush, Europeans don't overbuild and that they nurture the youth of Europe and make sure they understand golf can be a family sport as is happening in tennis in Europe."

What they really need, Stone said, are "sophisticated developers with 18-hole vision and they must take a long-term approach."

Smith, the English developer, said a lot of banks financing projects are from the United States and Far East. European banks are not willing to invest in an unknown, he said.

Smith said the "One Tax" law brought on by the European Economic Community in 1992 will create a 10-year boom. The cost of construction is about $6 million...
November 1989

CALENDAR

November

December
3-4 — Southern Grounds & Turf Maintenance Exposition and Conference (TURF), including educational seminars and exhibits, at the Myrtle Beach (S.C.) Convention Center. Contact Susan Jennings at 803-777-4556. 4-7 — Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show, sponsored by the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation and featuring more than 200 exhibitors as well as lectures, at the Ohio Center in Columbus. Contact Phyllis Pough, Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, Ohio 43216; 614-296-2601. 4-7 — New Jersey Turfgrass Expo '89, the Annual Turfgrass Educational Conference and Trade Show, sponsored by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension in cooperation with Cook College-Rutgers University and the New Jersey Turfgrass Association, at Resorts International Hotel in Atlantic City, N.J. Contact Dr. Henry W. Indyk, Crop Science Department, P.O. Box 230, Cook College, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903; 201-932-9453. 5-6 — GCSAA seminar on Public Relations and Public Speaking at Atlanta, Ga. * 5-7 — Pacific Coast Turf and Landscape Conference and Trade Show at Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle, Wash., including talks by national and regional experts on plant diseases, toxic waste disposal, groundwater contamination and use of pesticides and fertilizers. The event is sponsored by the Western Washington Golf Course Superintendents Association, Washington State University and Jones and Associates. For further information contact Jones and Associates, Park Center, Suite 200, N. 906 Howard St., Spokane, Wash. 99201; 509-327-5994. 8-9 — GCSAA seminars on Golf Course Construction Techniques and Management and on Golf Course Restoration, Renovation and Construction Projects at Tuxedo, N.Y. * 10-13 — The 41st Turfgrass Conference and Show at Metro Toronto Convention Centre, sponsored by the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association. Further information is available from CGSA at 2000 Westin Road, Suite 203, Weston, Ontario M9N 2X3; 416-249-7954. 11-12 — GCSAA seminar on Business Communication and Assertiveness Techniques at New Orleans, La. * 12-13 — GCSAA seminars on Golf Course Construction Techniques and Management and on Golf Course Restoration, Renovation and Construction Projects at Tuxedo, N.Y. *

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per course with a clubhouse and maintenance facility. He said Central Europe is a very exclusive market, and 90 percent can afford an upscale product. "It's very difficult to get permits for housing developments in France," he said, adding that Spain and Portugal are much easier because they are in a sunbelt market, with a lot of second homes. Smith said that with the advent of the EEC, a lot of people will be able to move businesses to warmer climates, so there are now a lot of options on land being scooped up and waiting for that event. England's Swan warned that while hundreds of courses are needed to fill the demand, the situation "is a worrying prospect as I recall only too well that in the early '70s when demand was high in my country we had some indifferent golf courses designed and built and irrigated; and since then those greenskeepers who have tried to maintain them, some well, some indifferent, some badly, have struggled because the basic concept and engineering was indifferent and defective."

He said the English Golf Union has formed a Golf Technical Committee comprised of experts in sports turf, ecology, environment, construction and design, and "with our intent to attempt to look towards providing minimum standards and guidelines for performance in the provision of golf courses."

Europeans hope that with the EEC, all the countries can come together and do research to form information outlets similar to the National Golf Foundation in the United States.

Jan Beljan is a designer with Fazio Golf Course Designers, Inc.