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 clear up golf courses that, in the wake of Hurricane Hugo's 135-mph winds, looked like a 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 Wielsbaden, 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 Americans and the Europeans are both interested in golf. The Americans are great, but along with them come some constraints — elaborate language, time, working conditions."

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Supers' needs must 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 DonuTrimmer 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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DonuTTrimmer

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management inventions by company founder Thomas Wait. With tongue firmly planted in cheek, Wait claims the concept for Greens Encroachment, like his other inventions, took root in his own laziness.

"Anything I can find to make my job and others' easier intrigues me," he said. The need for a more efficient way to maintain some of the Sunshine State's median strips led to the company's flagship product — the DonuTTrimmer edging blade.

In talking to course superintendent and partner Joseph DeMino of Rochester, N.Y., Wait discovered the circular blades (which come in diameters of 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 inches) could also be used to edge around sprinkler and mist heads, bunkers, cart paths and sidewalks in a fraction of the time and cost. Wait and DeMino determined there was a need for the product after attending the 1988 GCSAA International Golf Show in Houston, Texas, and they patented the blades.

To gain exposure, they volunteered to detail the courses at several tournaments including the 1988 Honda Classic held at TPC at Eagle Trace in Coral Springs, Fla., and other 1988 and 1989 major tournaments.

The product is currently installed on a test basis at Carolina Forest Country Club in Spartanburg S.C., Plantation CC in Ponta Verde, Fla. and Loxahatchee CC in Jupiter, Fla.

Country Club in Spartanburg S.C., Plantation CC in Ponta Verde, Fla. and Loxahatchee CC in Jupiter, Fla.

"That's where we are with it right now," said Wait, who has begun marketing Greens Encroachment as the other three products vigorously in preparation for February's annual superintendent's show in Orlando, Fla., his home state.

He predicts DonuTTrimmer 1990 revenues will exceed last year's 70 percent increase, mainly because of Greens Encroachment. But Wait said he'll be looking for more ways to make his job, and those of other people in the turf profession, a little easier.

"I've got another five ideas or so rolling around in my head right now," he said, "but our company's goal is to market these four products so everyone in the industry can take advantage of these labor-saving devices. I think the industry focuses on safety first, budget and product performance third. I know our products fit into these categories."

Hugo

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uprooted or broken to the ground. "I've never seen any storm of this caliber in my life," said Powell, who has been the club's superintendent for 20 years.

"There are huge haps where trees once stood. You could call it a major tragedy."

Some of the trees were 90 or 100 years old, Powell said, estimating their value at $250,000.

The timber company contracted to remove the debris was expected to be $41,270 five weeks on the job.

Powell and his 15-man crew opened the front nine holes on Oct. 14 and the opening of the back nine hinges on the new course's Grand Committee's decision on whether to wait for the trees to be hauled off.

Powell attributed much of Hugo's damage to soft ground, saying he thought many of the big trees would not have been uprooted if the summer had been drier.

A few miles away, Quail Hollow CC was in "perfect condition" on the eve of the Senior Tour's Payne-Webber Invitational when the storm tore into town. The result: a canceled tournament and more than 700 down or damaged trees, according to assistant superintendent Mark Harris.

"The press tent was demolished and everything went down," Harris said, but the overall look of the course has not changed because most of the larger trees that fell were along the tree line of the tees and fairways.

The clubhouse also lost part of its roof, but head superintendent Ray Avery's 22-man crew had the front nine holes open seven days later and the back nine open in two weeks.

Tommy Brasswell is a golf writer for the Charleston (S.C.) Post-Courier papers.