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left by the Force 4 hurricane. Hurricane Hugo left behind 100,000 pine trees like toothpicks, uprooted many majestic oaks and left its own indelible imprint on one of the country’s major golf destinations.

One course received an estimate of more than $300,000 for tree removal alone.

Huge tidal surges, reaching as high as 25 feet, cut their own trail through some of the golf courses, exposing irrigation lines, undermining cart paths, leaving a 32-foot boat perched on a green, washing away dunes and removing part of the 17th green and tee at one course with surgical precision. Some of the millions of trees left standing are ‘in shock’ and it may be a year before golf course superintendents will know if those trees will indeed survive the root damage and possible root disease, infesting their broken limbs.

Much of Hurricane Hugo’s fury hit two Tom Fazio-designed courses at Wild Dunes Resort on the Isle of Palms, just a few miles north of historic Charleston. The 17th and 18th holes of Sea Island West Course were severely damaged, and there still remains some question as to whether the holes can be rebuilt because of the state’s recently enacted Beachfront Management Act.

Already, Fazio has visited the course to survey the damage and begin formulating a plan for rebuilding.

The damage estimate on Wild Dunes alone may run more than $2 million. The irrigation system received severe damage. Pump stations were submerged in saltwater and now are useless. Many of the control boxes were uprooted and all along the dunes were submerged. Much of the irrigation pipe itself remained intact and is expected to be salvageable.

Many bridges on the Harbor Course also were destroyed in the hurricane, some of them washing across the Intracoastal Waterway onto neighboring Goat Island. Cleanup efforts began almost immediately, but greens superintendent Mike Fabrizio was forced to search throughout the island for maintenance equipment, which had been commandeered by National Guard troops protecting the island while martial law was imposed for more than a week following the storm.

Wild Dunes lost all but 62 of nearly 500 employees in the aftermath of the storm. Director of golf Terry Dyer, Links Course head professional Steve Behr and Harbor Course head pro Tommy Young remained on staff, but the rest of the assistant pros, shop personnel and others were laid off.

Fabrizio and about half of his 24-man grounds crew were retained.

“We’re going to rebuild, but we have to see what we can do,” Florence said. “With the exception of the trees, we can strengthen the golf course. We have to do something to overcome the loss of the trees.”

Fabrizio estimated that well over 50 percent of the course’s trees had been destroyed, trees that cannot be replaced. In addition to the replacement of the trees, he faces another, more immediate problem: how to dispose of the downed trees. He hopes he will be allowed to burn the trees, for trucking the debris off the island will be an expensive and time-consuming process.

A tree service has been consulted and soon will begin a renourishment program for the remaining trees.

Fabrizio said he is uncertain what will happen with the par 4 17th hole, where both the tee and green were claimed by the ocean. Enough remains of the par 5 18th that it can be rebuilt.

Both maintenance buildings received heavy damage, and most of the equipment, too, will have to be replaced.

A reopening date has not been set, although Florence said he hopes to put together 18 holes probably in some combination from the two courses, for play by spring.

Some 3 1/2 miles inland of Wild Dunes, across the massive but shallow expanse of Gray Bay, lies Charleston National Country Club, which was scheduled to open just a week after the storm. Charleston National is planned as an equity membership club, and club officials are still trying to retain that format as they dig deeper into their pockets to keep things going for an opening delayed some six months.

The course, designed by Rees Jones, received little structural damage. The 18 holes are intact, although there was one small breach that allowed saltwater to intrude into one of the lagoon systems. Heavy rains after Hurricane Hugo helped leach the saltwater, which covered seven or eight of the marsh-side holes, from the soil.

No equipment was lost to storm damage. The heavy equipment had been moved to the highest point on the golf course——the middle of the fifth fairway——and escaped the saltwater and falling trees.

Jones visited the course after the storm and said the damaged trees would actually open the marsh vistas on some holes. Charleston National official Tom Dyer said nine holes would reopen within a couple of weeks and the club planned to hold its first member-guest tournament before Christmas.

The devastation of Hurricane Hugo was random. Patriots Point Golf Links in Mount Pleasant, a public course that overlooks Charleston Harbor, was the first Charleston-area course to reopen, 2 1/2 weeks after the storm. The green on the par 3 17th at Patriots Point sits out in the marsh on the edge of Charleston Harbor, but according to golf professional Dave Nelson, the green apparently was covered by the tide before the storm surge hit, protecting the green. The heavy rains helped leach the salt from the soil.

Most other Charleston-area courses received heavy tree damage. The three courses at Kiawah Island had lots of downed trees. A spokesperson for the resort said reopening the resort was being delayed until all the cleanup work had been finished “in order not to compromise the guests’ stay.”

Osprey Point was to reopen Nov. 1 and Marsh Point a couple of weeks later. Turtle Point will remain closed while some renovation work, including expanding some of the greens, is in taking place.

A spokesperson for Landmark Land Co., which owns the Kiawah resort, said the Pete Dye-designed course being built for the 1991 Ryder Cup Matches has few trees and was unharmed by the storm and construction resumed after just one day.

Courses further south of Charleston received only minor tree damage and reopened almost immediately.

Hope Plantation on John’s Island near Kiawah and Seabrook Island resorts, kept its early November opening on schedule.

“We were extremely fortunate not to have sustained any real damage from the storm,” said Hope Plantation head golf pro John Roptera.

Hair Point on Dunes Island, S.C., also escaped Hugo’s wrath and expected to open its third nine on schedule in late fall.

Other courses in the golf-happy Grand Strand region received minor damage and most were reopened within a few days after Hurricane Hugo, although they are battling an image problem painted by the national media news which led people to believe the entire South Carolina coast was leveled.

Debdoules in Georgetown received extensive saltwater damage and some downed trees, but general manager Wallace Street said the course would reopen within 45 days, even if some of the greens had to be resodded.

Pawleys Plantation also received some damage and was temporarily closed, but re-opened in mid-October.

The Dunes Club in Myrtle Beach received some saltwater damage on three holes and was closed for a couple of weeks.

Other courses in the Grand Strand actually benefited from the respite in play, which allowed superintendents to get them in the best condition they’ve been in for years.

Charlotte Hartung, But 200 miles away, Charlotte courses were heavily battered. Perhaps worst hit was Myers Park Country Club, where, according to superintendent Dave Powell, 800 to 1,000 trees were

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