Rains deluge courses

BY PETER BLAIS
First Hurricane Hugo in South Carolina, then the San Francisco earthquake, then record-low temperatures in December throughout much of the United States, then, most recently, spring flooding in the south central Midwest.

It's been a tough past few months for the nation's golf courses.

Record April and May rainfalls swelled rivers and left entire courses under water in Arkansas and Texas. Some weren't expected to re-open until mid-June.

In Little Rock, Ark., Rebsamen Park Municipal Golf Course golf courses were completely flooded during the first week of May, according to Arkansas State Golf Association President Charles Wade. The back nine at Maumelle Golf and Country Club was

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Jobs galore for grads

BY PETER BLAIS
At Michigan State University, Assistant Professor John "Trey" Rogers has a list of 77 assistant superintendent openings for this year's 44 graduates of the school's two- and four-year turf management programs.

At Pennsylvania State University, 20 of this year's 36 turf management graduates had already accepted jobs as of mid-April, according to Professor Joseph Duiich. Another six were negotiating with employers and Duiich had little doubt the rest would find employment.

At Texas A&M University, instructor Wallace Menn estimates the school has received three times as many job offers as it has graduating students (45) of the four-year agronomy with turf management option program.

At California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, Professor Kent Kurtz

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Vegas debates effluent use

BY PETER BLAIS
The Colorado River Commission is considering stopping the use of effluent to water Southern Nevada golf courses, a move that could threaten development in one of the fastest-growing areas of the country.

The amount of drinking water southern Nevada is allocated from the Colorado River is determined to, an ex

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The floating 4th green at Coeur d'Alene is a monument to engineering and innovation. Courtesy of Scott Miller Design

Miller tests waters with floating green

BY BOB SPIWAK
When the golf course opens next summer at Idaho's Coeur d'Alene resort, it's going to make a big splash. Golfers, playing the 14th hole, will make a lot of smaller splashes. The course will feature the world's first floating island green.

Coeur d'Alene is in the panhandle of northern Idaho, tucked between Washington and Oregon. Surrounded by mountains, and on the shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene, the town was once a timber community. It has evolved into a recreational area and when land became available at the site of an old mill, local developer Duane Hagadone saw it as an ideal place for a golf course to accompany his hotel resort on the lake. Hagadone was certain of one thing

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Floating green

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An island green would be its signature. Hagadone selected Scott Miller Design of Scottsdale, Ariz., as the course architect. Miller spent nearly a decade with Jack Nicklaus’ design company and Courc d’Alene is his first project under his own name. The island 14th green may make the first the most unforgettable.

The four anchors in the lake, and two permanent anchors on the shore will allow movement of the entire green by means of a cable and winch system. It will be spotted from 75 to 175 yards from the shoreline.

No causeway connects it to the mainland. Instead, a launch will take golfers to the green.

The 14th green was engineered by Gloften Associates of Seattle, a naval architecture-engineering firm, according to John Marlow, administrative vice president of the Hagadone Corp.

It was built to conform to Miller’s grading plan and green size, which will measure roughly 140 by 110 feet. Some 15,000 square feet in area, it will have a putting surface of 7,000 square feet tucked into berms, feature thousands of red geraniums, trees and sandtraps.

No lightweight, No. 14 will weigh in at 4.5 million pounds. It is comprised of hollow concrete cells, most of which are 10 by 30 feet, some 10 by 20 feet and near the perimeter, a few 10 by 10’s.

“It’s like putting Lego pieces together,” said Marlow.

Prefabricated steel sections will be attached to the outer cells and faced with treated wood, which will create the final curves and match the wood facings at the mainland lakeside holes.

With a draft of five feet, the green will be stable on and in the water, regardless of wind and waves. There will be constant attention on the mooring system, which Marlow likened to pulling a large can of air under water, with the air being in the hollow concrete cells beneath the USGA-spec green.

While the 14th hole is the most unique, others on the course could qualify as “signature holes.”

Thirteen is reminiscent of the finishing hole at Pebble Beach. The lake parallels the fairway and the first and second shots must each carry an inlet.

Entirely different in character is the sixth, a par 3 with trees stair-stepping down a flowered, woody hill and with a green framed by pine tree, lake and mountains.

The course will play 6,518 yards from the pro tees and 4,532 from the front tees. Between are two permanent anchors on the shore, there was no end in sight to the waste. A system was designed wherein a plastic membrane was placed into the water above the waste. It serves the dual purpose of trapping and rerouting the methane gas from the rotting wood below, and recirculating the percolated water from the fill dirt above to a seven-acre beach field inland.

Another environmental concern was a creek that borders the 11th fairway. A prime trout-spawning stream, it is now protected by slopes and berms designed to preclude any runoff into it.

Wherever there is water, sumps and pipes were installed to carry the irrigation and rain water inland. Around the course are ground-water monitoring stations.

Greens are Penncross bentgrass and fairways are Penneagle bentgrass.

According to superintendent Steve Maas, the greens will be mowed with walk-behind mowers. His crew of 22 will work out of a new 9,000-square-foot maintenance area.

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Graduates

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tschutz Teaching Fellowship to nine job offers for each of his 15 turf management graduates. And so it goes.

With the recent golf boom, it's a buyer's job market for graduates of the country's better-known turf management programs. Students are frequently leaving their schools with a handful of assistant superintendent and, in some cases, head superintendent job offers.

"From everything we've heard, the job market is very good for turf management students," said Colleen Federson, director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

"We could use more students," said Kurtz, a member of Cal Poly's Horticultural Department which fell from 400 students in the mid-1970s to 160 this year. "High schools don't give students very good direction. They don't know about openings in a field like golf course superintendent."

With so many jobs to choose from, what sways a recent graduate to choose one course over another?

Money? Most assistants start in the $18,000 to $28,000 range according to Duich. Dutch has seen offers of more than $38,000. But money, at least for those first entering the field, "isn't as important as you might think," said Rogers.

Benefits? Many courses are offering improved insurance, retirement, vacation, clothing allowance and continuing education programs. Such perks are increasingly important, but rarely the make or break when recruiting an assistant superintendent, said Menn.

Coeur d'Alene

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gardening building. Outside, a state-of-the-art computer- controlled weather station will monitor and deliver irrigation throughout the course's 120 acres. "Fence to fence," Miller beams, "it's going to be like a park."

Native vegetation has been retained wherever possible, supplemented by plantings of ground cover junipers on the hillsides and decision making process."

Many turf management students will already have some practical golf course experience, probably as a laborer. In fact, it's required for admission into the Penn State and Michigan State programs.

"As a rule, we require at least three years of experience," said Duich of Penn State's associates program. "Some students have five or 10 years. So we have a lot of older students. We rarely get an 18-year-old.

"We also have many returning students. We've had people with chemistry, math, psychology and many other degrees. At some time they worked on a golf course and decided to get back into it rather than spend their lives doing what they'd originally studied to do."

Two-year programs tend to be the most popular at schools offering two- and four-year options. At Michigan, the associates program has about 10 applicants for 40 slots, said Rogers. Getting back into the job market quickly is important for those who already have degrees and possibly families.

"The older, returning student is often married and has a lot of desire. And success, I've found, is about 90 percent desire," said Rogers.

"We haven't found much of a difference in the quality of two- and four-year students. Once you're out there, you're judged on how you do your job, not the degree you have."

Texas A&M has a bachelor's program, leaving two-year degrees to the state's technical, junior and community colleges, said Menn.

"There are a lot of good two-year programs in the state. And we get some of the graduates of the two-year programs who want the broader base of a four-year degree," he said.

Texas A&M graduates tend to remain in Texas, with most eventually ending up at large-city courses. "But a look for assistant jobs in north Texas to get some bentgrass experience," Menn said.

Duich said Penn State has the hardest time filling job requests from courses in the northern New Jersey and Long Island areas. The cost of living and the lifestyle are a tough sell since most Penn State turf management students come from smaller towns, he said.

Rogers said the hardest requests for Michigan State to fill come from large cities like Chicago and Kansas City.

"Most of our students aren't from big cities. And let's face it, $20,000 will go a lot farther in Grand Rapids than it will in Chicago," he said.

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