All I want for Christmas is...
Superintendents from around the country reveal their wish lists, p. 19

ICE, WIND AND FIRE

Startling snowstorm buries Midwest
By Peter Blais
The Halloween snowstorm that blanketed the upper Midwest horrified superintendents, forcing many to close courses early and leaving them shaking their heads for failing to blowing out irrigation systems or make chemical and fertilizer applications earlier than usual.

Hurricane slashes, floods East Coast
By Mark Leslie
Fronted by ferocious winds and coinciding with high tide, Hurricane Grace blasted the East Coast from Maryland to Maine on Oct. 30, leaving some areas looking like a war zone — complete with National Guard troops. Golf courses built for beauty along the coastline paid the price for that location in a frighten-

Runaway blaze terrorizes Oakland area
By Peter Blais
OAKLAND, Calif. — One golf course suffered major damage and several others barely escaped the intense flames that engulfed the hills west of the city in late October.

The 12th green, 14th tee and several fairways at Claremont Country Club were severely burned by falling embers, according to superintendent Randy Gai. "We turned the irrigation system on in the early afternoon to stop fires from spreading up to the more delicate fairways. It looks like a disease outbreak where the cinders landed. We'll have to re-seed some spots," Gai said.

At least 300 trees along the course and another eight to 10 acres of wilderness area belonging to the Jim Smith-designed facility were also destroyed during the blaze, Gai added. The course closed from Oct. 22-28, re-opening the front nine on the 28th and the back nine a day later. Temporary greens or tees were needed.

Gai's crew re-seeded and re-sodded the damaged turf areas and removed 200 trees, including many stately redwoods and cypress, while the course was closed.

"We'll leave some of the scarred trees in and see what happens. But I expect we'll lose at least 300," the superintendent said.

The cost, mostly labor, to remove burned trees and repair damaged turf could run as much as $200,000, Gai said. Continued on page 15

EPA puts pesticide laws in states' hands
From staff reports
The federal government will soon give more responsibility to the states to manage pesticides that could contaminate ground water.

The Environmental Protection Agency's recently released Pesticides and Ground Water Strategy gives states a major role tailoring programs to meet local conditions to avoid adverse effects on human health and the environment.

"Current findings do not indicate a public health problem," noted EPA Deputy Administrator Henry Habicht. However, monitoring studies, including EPA's National Pesticide Survey of Drinking Water, continue to monitor the... Continued on page 9

COURSE MAINTENANCE
Flood washouts challenge Sugarloaf, Jones
By Peter Blais
Early season storm left 28 inches of the white stuff in Minneapolis and as much as 40 inches farther north near Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis. That's close to half the average yearly snowfall in all three areas.

Southern Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri received a mixture of snow and freezing rain, resulting in tree damage, power outages and delayed chemical and fertilizer applications.

"It was the largest single recorded snowfall here in the last 100 years," reported superintendent David Kohlbry of the 379-acre course on his Donald Ross-designed Northland Country Club in Duluth.

Kohlbry was fortunate. He blew out his irrigation system Oct. 1 and was just applying the last snow mold application to the final tee as the snow began falling around 1 p.m. on Oct. 31.

"My major concern was that the ground wasn't frozen yet," he added. "Snow mold could thrive in that stuff and we could have some real problems, especially on the fairways, next spring." Kohlbry also feared crown dehydration during the next few hours that brought chaos from which it took a week to recover.

Driving from east to west, the storm hit Maine and Massachusetts, then turned south, pounding the shoreline with 15-foot waves and causing heavier damage than Hurricane Bob, which had struck Aug. 19.

"It was scary," said Brian Cowan, superintendent at Eastern Ho Country Club in Harwich, Mass., on the outer edge of Cape Cod. He described 78 miles-per-hour winds and massive waves that washed 14 cottages and a half-dozen other golf houses over the water.

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Hurricane Grace racks Atlantic Coast with wind, waves

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houses out to sea. Seawater covered much of his course, depositing a tri-hull catamaran on the 10th fairway and assorted debris along the course's shoreline.

Dick Barry saw the storm from two viewpoints — as a member of his local fire department and part-time grounds employee at Cohasset (Mass.) Golf Club.

"It was like a war zone here," he said. "There are natural gas leaks everywhere, soldiers keeping watch over homes..."

Superintendent Rich Caughey at Hatherly Country Club in North Scituate, Mass., perhaps told the most symbolic tale of the hurricane.

"There is a house on our course," he said. A week after the storm, the house was still sitting in a marshland.

Elsewhere, coastal courses in Maryland, New Jersey and Long Island's Hamptons region were hit hard by the storm.

Jim Gilligan, superintendent at Richmond County Country Club at inland Belle Meade, N.J., said: "We were spared. The Jersey shore took over homes..."

Most superintendents on all the affected courses reported that their major task was cleaning up debris. Many said heavy rains helped flush the salt water through the turf, neutralizing the salt water. Others recorded no rain whatsoever.

"The best blessing was that no one was killed in the storm," Cowan said, relating how many homes and campers were washed into the ocean. "In the 25 years I've been here we've never had a storm this bad. Erosion went 30, 40 feet above sea level.

"The winds had so much force in with such fury it took out a portion of the 7th tee, went over the tee into the fairway, and flooded the fairway. Boats, docks, anything that wasn't tied down broke loose. We have lumber, chairs, propane tanks, all sorts of things on our shoreline."

Although one tee was torn apart and two greens were dangerously eroded, repairs at Eastward Ho are "in the distant future," Cowan said. "We can't do anything about it, yet. We've been in the permitting process since 1989 trying to get permission to build a seawall to prevent this from happening in Northeastern or tidal surges. Now it's happened."

Eastward Ho still must get permits from a number of federal, state and town agencies, Cowan said.

The major loss?

The elevated green on the signature 15th hole (once declared by Golfdom magazine "one of the prettiest holes in the country") was undermined by erosion.

"Erosion is so close to the playing surface I don't want the liability of someone getting hurt," Cowan said, adding that golfers are playing a 14-hole course.

Cowan's crew had to pump water off the course for four days and, despite a four-inch rain, may still have to spread gypsum to neutralize the salt, he said.

Caughey saw 10 feet of water submerge much of Hatherly Country Club, which has ocean on two sides and marsh on the other two.

"Three holes were completely covered and five others were two-thirds under water for several hours," Caughey said.

He figures one major task next year will be digging out and refilling Hatherly's bunkers.

Caughey felt the three inches of rainfall flushed the salt past the root zone. "We're lucky it didn't occur at a stressful time of year for the turf," he said.

While waiting to get on their wet course for a "massive cleanup," Caughey's six-man crew used the club's two backhoes to clear area Driscoll's ponds. Also, the winds were high and there was a lot of debris on courses.

McGuinnes, from the Woodmere (N.Y.) Club, had to stop play for four days on this Robert Trent Jones-designed layout.

Woodmere is so close to sea level that it "has trouble at moon tide," McGuinnes said. Luckily, Grace brought little wind and no rain — just high tide, he said.

When the hurricane struck, the 17th and 18th greens were underwater for 36 hours. "But we turned on the irrigation to flush them out — one hour on, one hour off."

It worked.

Rehoboth Beach (Del.) Country Club assistant superintendent Ed Brown said high tides flooded about 80 percent of his course, all fairways. The greens and tees are elevated.

"The bay surged over tide gates and bulkheads and onto the course. It stayed flooded for two days and drained by itself," Brown said.

He said crews have applied gypsum in the recent past, so they did not need to apply it again. "We irrigated heavily as soon as it started to dry," which proved sufficient, he said.

Oakland fire frightens area courses

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Oakland fire frightens area courses

estimated. The figure could have gone much higher, especially if the flames had reached the clubhouse. Fortunately, the building sits on the extreme southwest corner of the property while the fire bore down from the northeast.

"The course acted like a giant fire break," Gai said.

Gai said 15 to 18 members were among the 3,300 people who lost their homes in the blaze, which caused an estimated $1.5 billion damage.

While the fire stopped about 1-2 miles short of nearby Montclair Golf Course, the blaze has severely affected business at the par-3 facility.

"Many of the people who play here lived in those homes," said owner Fillim Lee. "We were the closest public golf facility, so we'll feel a big impact."

Smoke was visible over the ridge separating Orinda County Club from the inferno, although flames never reached the course, said assistant pro Bob Tomasi.
Snow buries Midwest courses

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tion as the snow settles and temperature drops. Poa annua, which is common at Northland, will be particularly susceptible to rup- turfing because it lacks the natural re- silience to dehydration that benighgrass possesses, he said.

The Minneapolis area, which has enjoyed several consecutive mild winters, was caught short by the storm. The snow began falling mid- day Thursday (Oct. 31), and con- tinued all day Friday before taper- ing off Saturday afternoon.

"This is my 10th full season here and I've never seen anything like this so early. I've asked neighbors, who have been here even longer, and they say this is the worst," said Chris Hague of Hazeline National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn., site of the 1991 U.S. Open.

"Many people hadn't blown out their irrigation systems," he said. "They're bleeding the heads through two to three feet of snow. The ground didn't have a chance to freeze, though, so they should be able to pull it off." Hague devoted three crew mem- bers exclusively to removing snow from greens and tees so he could administer a final snow mold fungicide treatment.

"You couldn't get down your winter protection in time," Hague said. "People are going to have to put down granular applications instead of spraying. It's a real mess."

Keith Scott at Oak Ridge Coun- try Club in nearby Hopkins is also moving snow from tees and greens, hoping to get down a second snow mold fungicide application.

"By removing the snow this week we should be fine," he said in early November. "The fairways could have a few rough spots next spring. Otherwise, we should be OK."

Minneapolis-area superintendents who use snow covers were unable to get them down in time, Hague said. "But with this much snow for insulation, we won't need covers as long as the weather stays cold. We're better off if it stays like this (15 degrees the day he was contacted) than having the snow melt and freeze again later."

The ground's failure to freeze before the storm could prove a sil- ver lining. If it does not freeze all winter, the snowmelt will drain through the soil quicker next spring. That would require less clean-up than water running off frozen ground, Hague said.

Missed snowmold applications, canceled fall projects (bunker renovations, tree clearing) and being able to lay off seasonal em- ployees earlier than usual also saved on the maintenance budget, he added.

But those projects will have to be done next spring, Hague noted. Re- pairing snow mold-damaged turf could prove costly. And irrigation lines that weren't drained before the storm could show leaks once the system is restarted.

"Overall, there are more nega- tives than positives," Hague said.

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Faubel proves prevention theory versus gypsy moths

By Peter Blais

Homeowners near Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club are about to get a dose of the old adage concerning an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure.

Over the past seven years, superintendent Gerald Faubel closely monitored the consistent build-up of gypsy moths, which can defoliate an entire golf course in a few weeks. "We reached a threshold last fall that, if we allowed the population to keep growing, we were going to suffer significant damage," said the immediate past president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Faubel decided an aerial spraying of BT was in order. He informed the owners of the 200 neighboring home sites this spring that the application was about to take place and invited them to participate. They declined.

"People usually wait until fiscal matter is actually falling from the trees before they'll do anything. By then, it's too late," Faubel said.

"It's difficult to get homeowners to agree to spray. A single person can stop a spraying project, even if all his neighbors want it. "It usually takes a county-wide mandate. But, by that time, the situation is often too bad to save the trees."

Saginaw Country Club is isolated enough that it did not need its neighbors' approval. Faubel said he received no negative reaction after informing neighbors the application would go ahead. In fact, many were out with cameras at 5:30 a.m. the day the plane swooped over the golf course, he added.

"We got excellent control of the moths within a few days," Faubel said. "We knocked the population back to the point where we won't have to spray next year and probably for a few years after that."

"By monitoring the population closely, you can alleviate most problems with a single pesticide application. We'll keep monitoring. We're willing to suffer some damage, but not wholesale devastation."

When the population reaches a critical level again, we'll treat it.

"We save money by not having to treat yearly and also make the trees healthier. We're seeing that a true integrated pest management approach can work."

And what of Saginaw Country Club's neighbors?

Studies of the gypsy moth larval population already show that trees at many home sites will suffer significant defoliation this spring. But the club can work."

Faubel was shoveling off the snow so the sun could melt the underlying ice. Allowing a final snow mold fungicide application. Power outages, fallen trees and downed branches were major problems.

"We lost three full trees, including a big willow, and a lot of large branches," Anderson reported.

Sioux Falls, S.D., and Omaha, Neb., roughly marked the western edge of the storm, which tracked from south to north.

"We just got the lines blown out the morning the storm hit," said Tom Jansa, assistant pro at Elmwood Golf Course in Sioux Falls, recipient of a dozen inches of early-season snow.

"It wasn't as good of a job as we would have done if we could have waited a little longer," he said. "We also moved up the snow mold application and got it done that same morning."

The course closes Nov. 1. "So, we basically lost just one afternoon's worth of play."

Omaha got three inches of ice, followed by eight inches of snow and 40-mile-per-hour winds, according to Omaha Country Club assistant superintendent Joe Adams.

The course received less than 24 hours notice of the storm's arrival and had no time to blow out the irrigation system or apply fall fertilizers and fungicides.

"We usually don't have to do those things anymore for another three or four weeks," Adams said during the first week of November. "We've been digging up drains and blowing the sprinkler heads. We've had to chip through ice to get at them.

"The ground is still soft, so we should not have any cracked pipes. The ice insulated everything."

The storm tracked as far east as Dubuque, Iowa, on the Illinois border.

"Wegot 1-1/2 inches. It's stopped us from getting a few things done," said Jim Burton of Dubuque Golf & Country Club.

"My wife is in the landscaping business. She's got $3,000 worth of perennials sitting in the garage that she wanted to plant on the course and other places."

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