Hurricane Bob leaves Cape Cod bent and brown; grounds crews still cleaning up

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on Buzzards Bay.
New Seabury Country Club, a week away from hosting an American Junior Golf Association Tournament, was left with as much as a foot of sand and seaweed and another foot of salt water.

Hyannisport Club lost five greens to severe salt damage despite hee-- and at first promising — efforts to save them.

Thousands of trees — including 600 at Kittansett Club and 800 at New Seabury CC alone — were snapped or felled by the winds.

Woods Hole Golf Club saw almost the entire sand of trees lining the 15th hole come down.

New Seabury CC faced the most immediate problem — preparing for the tournament. The eye of the hurricane passed over the front nine of the facility's famous Championship course, depositing thousands of yards of sand and pockets of water, completely covering the cart path that runs along the ocean, and changing the shape of the 2nd and 3rd holes.

The storm struck in the morning and was gone in hours. In the midst of it, superintendent Lenny Blodgett and grounds crew foreman Lenny Brimigion drove to the course and saw "the 2nd and 3rd fairways were now ocean, with waves crashing down. The 2nd through the 8th holes were totally inundated."

Blodgett and Danny Coon, supervisor of golf operations and maintenance, did an emergency plan in motion.

Before nightfall, the course's five 300-gallon-per-minute pumps were draining salt water from the fairways, covering the cart path that runs along the ocean, and changing the shape of the 2nd and 3rd holes.

The storm caused an estimated $350,000 damage to the course — $122,000 on the 3rd hole alone. But the front nine was covered by a catastrophic insurance policy. Blessed with a 100-employee crew made up of walkers, busboys and lifeguards from the club, local contractors and his groundskeepers, Blodgett moved to neutralize the three threats to the turf — salt, sand and standing water.

At dawn the next day the crew worked to remove the water, then shoveled and bulldozed as much as two feet of salt-laden sand back onto sand dunes at the ocean's edge.

Next, gypsum was spread over the course, helping to leach the salt through the soil profile and limit salt damage. The greens were then watered twice that day and the next. The quick work saved the greens.

In mid-September trucks were haulled in new root zone mix for the 2nd and 3rd fairways. Sodding had to be done to be ready for yet another competition, the Massachusetts Mid-Amateur Tournament, scheduled Sept. 30 to Oct. 1.

Colombo said that before the storm: "I realized it (front nine) was vulnerable. Everyone always wondered what would happen if a really big storm hit. Now they know."

Photo by Steve Heath/Cape Cod Times

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Compared to Bob, Hurricane Gloria in 1985 had only flooded about 60 percent of the 3rd fairway and it was wet for only one day, said Blodgett, who compared that to having "so much water and you can only do so much, so fast."

**ELSEWHERE**
Meanwhile, at Kittansett Club, superintendent Bob Anderson faced a massive task of prepping for the tournament.

"Water was five, six feet over the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 17th and 18th fairways. The 1st, 6th, 7th and 18th were destroyed, and parts of the other two," Blodgett said.

"Since he has no irrigation he had to rely on rainfall. Even though Hyannisport Club, just 25 miles to the east, received 1 1/2 inches of rain, Kittansett got none."

"I'm slicing, seeding in, putting on gypsum and a lot of starter high phosphates on the fairways, if it ever does rain," Blodgett said.

He said the greens were under water for a day, until the tides were out. Then it was all hand-shoveling. We had seven to eight inches of debris on all the greens. The salt killed them.

Blodgett spike seeded eight to 10 different ways into six ruined greens and on damaged tee areas. And at nights he had "50 to 60 people in working on the course — loggers, loaders, backhoes. I had to rebuild the 3rd hole with crates."

He used a blend of rye grasses because they need less water than bentgrass.

"I'm waiting for nature," he said. "I'm watering lightly three or four cycles a day, then put on Subdue so I don't get damping off on the seed."

"I've had a lot of coastal storms but not this bad, except Gloria because Gloria didn't have rain afterwards. If I had had rain it would have saved a lot. Plus I was out of power (Bob) so I couldn't run my booster pumps."

"Golf pro Tom Shea said everything '10 feet under water and the river with high-pressure hoses, then aerate again with real fine, solid tines to poke more holes, get more water in it and close in the big egrets a little bit."

But, a couple of days later — "just when it looked like the course would recover" — the damage showed.

That last Passios, assistant Mark Egan and their crew working to restore the lost turf.

**OTHER COURSES WERE LUCKIER**
Henry Coffin III, superintendent at Sankaty Head Golf Club in Siasconset on Nantucket Island, said the handful of courses on the island were spared serious damage because they are on the high side of the island.

"We had high winds and all our trees turned brown from the salt spray. But we lost just three big pine trees," Coffin said.

The Taunton River overflowed and submerged Fall River Country Club's 10th fairway, half the 6th fairway, and the 3rd fairway halfway up the apron of the green.

Thomas Olson's crew treated for salt, watered a lot, and got their hoped-for rain for two days after Hurricane Bob.

In Maine, the storm mostly left behind limbs and other debris from trees.

One major exception was Falmouth Country Club, where superintendent Kevin Ross and his crew had to contend with an over-flowing Presumpscot River that inundated the green half of the 13th hole and one-third the tee half of the 14th hole.

The major financial damage, Ross said, was done to his irrigation control system. Three satellite clocks, costing $1,300 apiece, were submerged and one controller ruined.

Beyond that, Falmouth suffered severe bunker washouts, some cart path destruction and loss of 75 to 100 trees that were snapped or uprooted.

Just when the water subsided from the fairways 48 hours after a storm, a rainstorm dropped another inch and a half of water and "compounded everything," Ross said. "We were back in the slow again."

He said his crews had to wash off silt from the river with high pressure hoses, then aerate heavily.

Hodge and aides won't soon forget, though, the "Sheets of White" rain chasing them to cover.

**Nominations sought for turf awards**
SAN DIEGO, Calif. — The Sports Turf Managers Association is seeking nominations for its annual awards program. Awards will be presented at its annual meeting here Dec. 4-7.

Award categories are: Football Field of the Year; Soccer Field of the Year; Outstanding Commercial Affiliate; Excellence in Research, and Lawn Ranger Award for best grounds maintenance supervisor.

Sports Turf Managers Association membership is an eligibility requirement. Nominations should be submitted to Greg Petry, Waukegan Park District, P.O. Box 708, Waukegan, IL 60079. Attn: STMA Awards.

By comparison, Hurricane Bob was a zephyr, uprooting only 100 trees and washing out culverts and bridges.

There may be a slight bright side to the wind strike Hodge dubbed "After The Storm," federal disaster funds may be forthcoming.

Hodge and aides won't soon forget, though, the "Sheets of White" rain chasing them to cover.