MAINTENANCE

HOUSTON COURSES STRUGGLE TO RECOVER FROM MONSTER STORM

By JOEL JOYNER

HOUSTON — Randy Dayton could scarcely believe his eyes on Saturday morning, June 9, when he gazed upon the devastation wrought by Tropical Storm Allison. Much of his golf course was under water.

The Houston area got three feet of rainfall from Allison before it moved northeast. Weather experts calculate that the storm dumped enough rain to supply the nation’s water needs for an entire year.

Dayton was in his seventh week as superintendent at Northgate Country Club here when the monster storm struck. “We got hit Friday night,” he said, “and by Saturday morning everything was flooded. We’re not certain what our total rainfall was — our gauge overflowed.”

Dayton’s Northgate facility sits along Cypress Creek. “When I stand on the course and look down at this creek, it normally sits 30 feet below in a canyon,” he said. “It’s hard to believe it came up over the banks. The water rose so quickly.”

Allison has now been pegged as the most costly tropical storm in U.S. history. At least 50 deaths are blamed on the tempest. Thousands of people have been left homeless. And federal disaster officials estimated damage at more than $4 billion in Texas alone.

SIX FEET OF SILT

Allison skipped the tropical depression stage and went straight into a punishing tropical storm, with winds reaching 60 mph.

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EAGLES DARE AT COLORADO’S ASPEN GLEN

By ANDREW OVERBECK

CARBONDALE, Colo. — The private Aspen Glen Golf Club, set in a spectacular Rocky Mountain region near Glenwood Springs, takes uncommon pride in its roosting bald eagles and two trout-spawning channels.

Now it’s got the official credential to prove its environmental zeal — certification in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. It’s the 15th course in Colorado to win the coveted designation.

Every year, anywhere from one to three bald eagles visit Aspen Glen. The club, opened in 1997, has a “protection zone” around a nest that has been at the site since the 1940s.

“The eagles reside seasonally on this prominent 150-foot ponderosa pine that’s adjacent to our 10th fairway,” said superintendent Richard Eide. “Whenever an eagle is present, we shut down the hole.”

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PINEHURST PROMOTES KOCHER, FARREN

PINEHURST, N.C. — Brad Kocher has been named vice president of golf planning and oversight at The Home- 

nance at Pinehurst’s eight courses, which includes Daufuskie Island, S.C.; Palmilla in Los Cabos, Mexico. Bob Ferran, Jr., Kocher has overseen course mainte-

nance here at The Pinehurst Com-

pany, the resorts division of ClubCorp.

PSU AGRONOMY DEPARTMENT RENAMED

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — The agronomy department at Penn State has updated its approach to student recruitment by becoming the department of crop and soil sciences. “We made the change for the sake of clarity,” said A.J. Turgeon, professor of turfgrass management and interim department head, who said the move might attract more undergraduates. “Agronomy has always been about crop production and soil resources, but it’s an older term that a lot of people don’t often recognize,” he said. “Our research and extension activities in production agriculture, environmental stewardship and land use policy won’t change,” said Turgeon.

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MAINTENANCE FIRMS: SUPERINTENDENTS’ FRIEND OR FOE?

By JOEL JOYNER

CALABASAS, Calif. — Are maintenance companies big bad corporations that run roughshod over superintendents as they gobble up contracts? Or are they a relief to courses in need of professional care?

Surprisingly, the companies and superin-

dents tend to agree.

“Superintendents are our friends,” said Terry McGuire, Environmental Golf’s director of business development. “We’re made up of superintendents. We’re not the bad guys. We’re not the management company by type-

cast. We want to be the most superintendent-friendly company in the business.”

RETAINING EXISTING STAFF

There are some 45 superintendents within the organization. “We hire on as many of the employees as possible with a newly contracted course,” McGuire said. “We place them on probation for about 90 days. It provides an opportunity for them to get to know us and for us to get to know the employee.”

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EAGLES NEST IN PONDEROSA PINE NEXT TO THE 10TH FAIRWAY

Aspen Glen started monitoring the nest in 1997, prior to course construction. The club hired a bird-watcher to observe the nest and document all eagle sightings.

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CADDYSHACK III: SUPERINTENDENTS’ ‘REVENGE DAY’

By ANDREW OVERBECK

GUANGZHOU, China — Superintendent Keith Pegg here at Guangzhou Luhu Golf and Country Club has come up with an ingenious method of getting course projects done without making them seem so disruptive to golfers.

“We call it Superintendent’s Revenge Day,” explained Pegg. “It is a day that the greens staff gets to have a little fun, and the golfers enjoy it also. We take advantage of these different scenarios in order to get project work done.

“For example, if I have a drainage project or work on a hole that will get in the way, I will move the tee markers up into the fairway and shorten the hole so people do not have to play in the construction area,” he said.

Pegg uses the system practically but also has some fun with it. “Sometimes we’ll just take all the tee markers on a hole and aim them into the woods,” he said. “We do it one time each month and try to keep the golfers guessing.”

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