Credit the Crawler

The flooded Guadalupe River dumped mud, water and nearly two feet of silt on the Bandit GC. But it was a nifty, all-purpose construction vehicle to the rescue.

Problem
The 500-year flood nearly wiped out the Bandit GC last fall. It left mud, water and silt in its wake, not to mention a clogged irrigation system. What to do to clean up the course?

Solution
Bring in the crawler, a 9,000-pound vehicle with low ground pressure and superb traction. It cleaned up the mess and didn’t damage the course in the process.

The problem
The destruction from the flood would have been bad enough, but when the water receded the aftermath was even worse. Mud had gummed up Bandit’s entire irrigation system, and it was no longer functioning.

Though the entire course sustained damage, the worst was found on holes No. 12 and 13, where nearly 24 inches of silt had been deposited on the greens and fairways.

“We didn’t know what we were going to do about it,” Cope says. “It was a hair-raising experience.”

Options considered
When Cope and his team sat down to brainstorm solutions, few were forthcoming.

With the irrigation system gummed up with mud, hosing off the silt was not a viable option. Besides, it was doubtful that water could rid the fairways and greens of that much silt.

“We also considered bringing in tractors and other heavy loading equipment, but none of that stuff would work because of the damage those machines would do to the course,” Cope notes.

For a time, it seemed the Guadalupe River had won.

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Solution chosen
Searching for an alternative, Cope contacted Steve Tolliver of S.H. Tolliver Construction, one of his primary contractors, who put him in contact with All Weather Sales and Rental, a Georgetown, Texas-based firm specializing in equipment that works in difficult terrain.

All Weather suggested that Cope rent a Posi-Track all-purpose crawler manufactured by ASV Inc. of Grand Rapids, Minn.

Though similar in size and shape to a skid-steer, the machine utilized a technologically advanced undercarriage and rubber tracks, giving the 9,000-pound vehicle extraordinarily low ground pressure (3.0 psi) and traction. Cope rented the machine because it appeared to be the only viable solution.

Outcome
Once on the course, the machine lived up to its billing. “It worked better than we had hoped,” Cope says.

With a bucket attachment, Cope and his team pushed the silt and mud off the fairways and greens. The job took about three weeks.

Operating the 7,500-pound machine with rubber tracks was similar to allowing a third-grader in sneakers on the course. Historically, machines light on the ground don’t have the power necessary to do heavy work, and powerful machines cause too much damage. But Cope discovered that the Posi-Track’s intricate wheel pattern within the rubber-tracked undercarriage not only gave the machine a light footprint, but also traction and power. Thanks to the undercarriage, the machine was able to touch softly on the turf at Bandit GC, but also have the traction to push the heavy sludge. With the bucket attachment, the machine was able to skim the sludge down to a half inch, a point at which water could be used.