



When large hail stones rain down on a golf course the damage can be tremendous.

WHEN ALL HAIL BREAKS LOOSE

BY LARRY GILHULY | AGRONOMIST, WEST REGION

A few weeks before the 2018 U.S. Senior Open at The Broadmoor, a large hailstorm swept through the area and caused extensive damage. Superintendent Mike Sartori estimated that several hundred labor hours were required to repair the damage, with extensive hand work needed to repair the putting greens. Fortunately, the championship was conducted without any major weather issues and the maintenance staff produced a superbly conditioned golf course. However, the hailstorm before the championship paled in comparison to the hailstorm that hit Colorado Springs on August 6.

In addition to killing three birds at the nearby Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, torrential hail injured several people that could not reach cover in time. The hail also caused extensive damage to all 36 holes at The Broadmoor, where hail nearly the size of tennis balls pummeled the greens, tees, fairways and roughs. The playing surfaces at The Broadmoor were riddled with thousands of craters that needed to be addressed to return the playing surfaces to a semblance of smoothness.



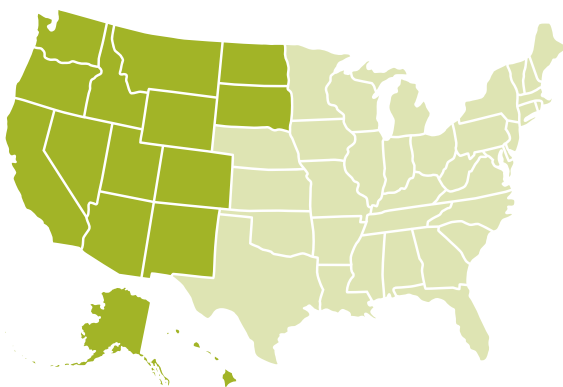
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Fred Dickman, director of Golf Course Maintenance and Hotel Grounds, reported that both golf courses were closed for one week to start the recovery process. The golf courses are now open, but complete recovery is not expected to occur until the end of the growing season. Over 1,000 hours of labor have gone into fixing the putting surfaces, but the tees, fairways and roughs also needed attention.

The damage to trees was also extensive. Dickman reported that there will be ongoing hours of labor spent cleaning up the tree debris caused by the storm. By the end of the winter it is expected that several thousand hours of labor will have been needed to complete the cleanup and recovery process necessitated by this storm.

The only positive concerning this entire situation is that the hailstorm did not occur before the U.S. Senior Open. The only indentations that occurred on the greens during the championship were ball marks made by high-quality approach shots.



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