Superintendent Rick McDow estimates a 350-hour clean up and repair job needed to get Ballinger back in shape.

by LESLEE JAQUETTE

If the Ballinger Park Municipal Golf Course were a bathtub, it would have the world's biggest ring, from flood waters that covered the course in December.

Included among the flotsam and jetsam floating along what used to be fairways are pop cans, a soccer ball, railroad ties, cedar logs, four rowing skiffs that were lifted from a shoreline, and a 30-foot boat dock.

The damage done to this nine-hole public golf course located 13 miles north of Seattle on Lake Ballinger, is extensive. Superintendent Rick McDow estimates more than two-thirds of the 35-acre course was covered for several days in late December/early January, in what looks like a tidal slosh.
Clean-up strategy for wet, wet turf

- Focus the budget dollars on survival. Get the course clean and safe.
- Expect lots of hand work, due to high saturation.
- Plan to bring in heavy equipment in April, June at the latest.
- Logs, timbers, docks will have to be sawed into manageable pieces and carried to trucks.
- Ryegrass will have to be brought in well in excess of the usual 500 pounds used in a year.
- Fungicide applications on greens and tee boxes will have to go beyond the usual two per year applications.

Pest damage mounts

Crows, Canada geese and mallard ducks are expected to do more damage. Crows are the worst, says McDow.

"The critters will chew up this turf like crazy. Going after insect larvae, they will peck the course to death."

Mallards dive to chew up thousands of tufts of turf, pieces of which will be seen floating in the receding lake.

Mud, water, pine needles, a variety of plant and human crud edge the course like a dozen ugly bathtub rings.

"Floods are all a part of the game," says McDow. "Still, it's hard to accept, because, taken in conjunction with our ailing equipment and lost revenue, it makes everything snowball downhill."

—The author is a writer/photographer based in Edmonds, Wash. Photos by Leslee Jaquette

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