



No Dog Days this August

Did anyone have an ordinary summer? Usually it works the other way around, but it seemed that just after one of our thousand-foot deep wells failed, the rain started to fall. In our vicinity, we totaled around 13½" rain for August, with 7½" coming in one 24-hour span. A piece of equipment that was utilized most during the month was a 2-inch trash pump powered by a Honda engine. It truly worked flawlessly with minimal maintenance.

Another piece of equipment that got used to the extreme was the Toro 3020 Sandpro. Of the 42 bunkers on the property, 42 needed sand pushed somewhere or another. The dozer blade could only handle so much rain soaked/packed sand at each try, placing the real load on the system of the 3020. It held up and saved many man-hours in addition to many man backs.

There was a span of four days that the greens, approaches, and tees were not cut. Up to this point the greens were maintained at 0.125" with triplexes. I set up our walking greens mowers at 0.130" and by the time we were able to get out on the greens with them unbelievable scalping occurred, even on the sand greens. I ended up bumping up the height to 0.150" just to stop the scalping. It took all day to get the greens cut with two walkers. After every fourth pass the baskets had to be emptied by staff. Though we were able to mow greens, the majority of fairways and approaches were still sub-

mersed or just too soggy to transverse. Under normal circumstances, we drain fine as long as the north branch of the Chicago River (it borders to our north and west) is not cresting. This year it never seemed to crest.

On August 22, a Wednesday, came 80 mph winds and another 1½" of rain. Late in the afternoon, Mike Matchen (Golf Course Superintendent) phoned me and told me to park in the main lot at the clubhouse and "hoof it" to the shop in the morning. He explained at least one huge tree had blown over the service road that led to our maintenance facility.

The following morning, I arrived a little earlier than normal expecting a nice walk to the shop. Hah! Among the scattered trees, limbs, leaves, wastebaskets, and push carts, was the addition of small lakes and ponds that were not there the day before. I was not prepared with boots or flashlight, however my dog was having a great time rummaging and sniffing through all



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the debris. After 20 minutes of maneuvering, I arrived at the shop. Thankfully the building's external lights were on, which meant I could make coffee.

Mike arrived minutes later singing, "Mama said there would be days like this, there'd be days like this, mamma said". He also said there is only one word for today...which I will omit, I'm sure you can imagine one or two to fill the void.

As the starting time approached for the rest of the crew, I took the pick up truck up to closest point to the main lot to shuttle the men back to the shop. As the sun rose, the view became clearer. There was no way I had enough saw chain, bar oil, or 2-cycle mix on hand.

Once I was back at the shop, Mike, Rick, and I discussed preliminary game plans. The first priority was to clear the maintenance road. We would use the road to stage branches and tree limbs the length of its route. Two hours later, the road was passable. Next, the trash pumps went back out on the job.



Disregard all the work done to the bunkers the few days before. The sand was washed away again. As I took a ride out on the maintenance road I brought my camera and camcorder along. I was amazed by the mess. The only question that came to mind was where to start? How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time a wise woman told her children when they complained of too much home work. Well, we had one big 110-acre elephant on our hands.

By the next day, Friday the 24th, we all new this would be an endless week, right through the weekend and well into the



next week. Saturday morning I was given the task of purchasing three additional chainsaws and extras. After searching Lake County's various equipment dealers for nearly three hours I returned to the course with new artillery for timber at hand. Over the course of the week, I must have sharpened 35 chains saving the course \$300-\$350 in outside services. On a side note, we also went through 4 gallons of bar oil in just four days.

By Sunday the 26th, we were able to get out and start cleaning fairways with tractor mounted blowers. I got the opportunity to cut up some timber too. Under cutting logs averaging 30" in diameter with a 27" - 80cc chain saw was a great work out, but not when you do it once every 10 years. I couldn't raise my arms on Monday morning.



Five days later the water finally receded. With that, came the stench of which I had never experienced. I had no idea how bad dead, rotted turf could smell. Whew, did it stink.

Usually we are happy when it is the last week of August, but this year is different. We have all of our fall projects and tasks to begin: aeration, topdressing and others. I wonder what September will bring. Our crew of eleven worked diligently accruing many overtime hours on demand with no warning. Many thanks to the staff and all involved in this unscheduled turn of events.



Now as we experience the leaves falling, I wonder if the loss of nearly 80 trees back in August is noticed. I'll let you know. **-OC**