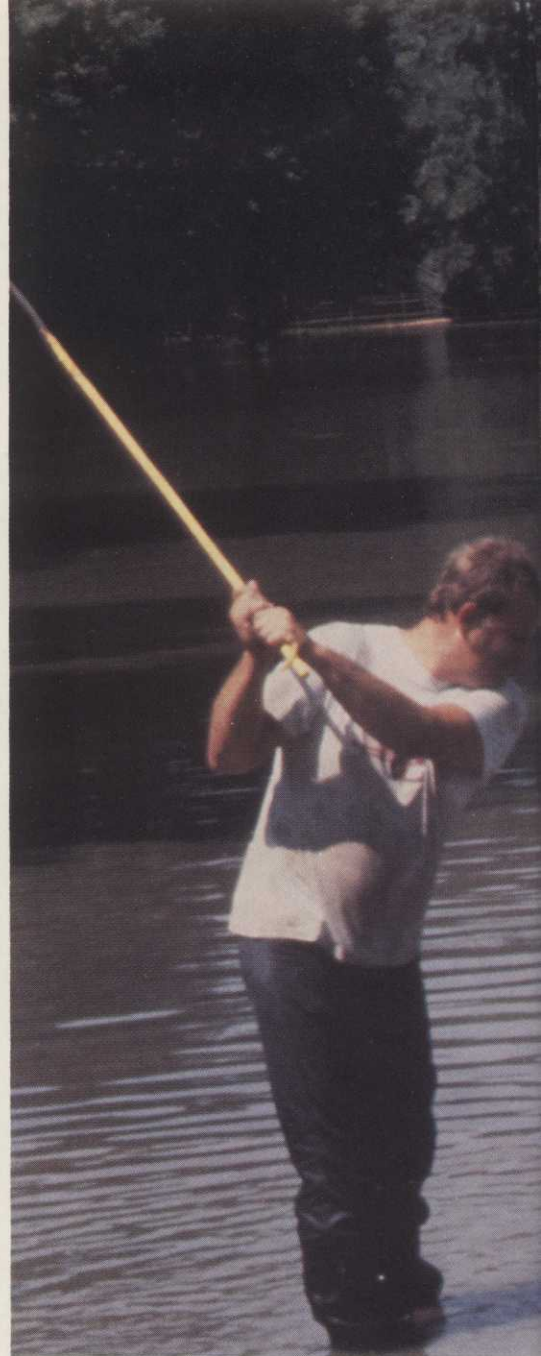


Disaster Scenario Number 1: On the week before the PGA Tour makes its annual visit, first you get your 100-year flood... and then it REALLY begins to rain!

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water!



BY LARRY KIEFFER

LAKE BUENA VISTA — Are you prepared for disaster?

If half your course were under water — up to 8 feet in places — how quickly could you get it ready for play?

Could you do it in five days?

Oscar Miles did.

Miles, golf course manager of Butler National GC in Oak Brook, Ill., watched the rain fall and the creek rise one August weekend in 1987 until seven holes of his golf course surrendered to the torrent.

Three days before the suburban Chicago golf club was to begin hosting the Western

Open — second-oldest tournament on the PGA Tour — half the course lay beneath waters that had reached a height attained only once every hundred years.

Five days later, the course had been drained, scrubbed, rinsed, squeegeed and blow-dried by helicopters to the point that a credible, albeit abbreviated, PGA Tour event could tee off two days behind schedule.

And as soon as D.A. Weibring cleared the 18th green with his \$144,000 check, Miles and his crew immediately launched a nine-month reconstruction and recovery program that left several holes more flood-

resistant than before and the whole course much improved.

“We used the situation to make all the improvements we had been talking about for years,” Miles told 30 superintendents attending the seminar at the 13th annual Crowfoot Open at Grand Cypress Resort Aug. 6.

While it is unlikely that the peculiar meteorological, geological and hydrological conditions that created the Butler Na-



BUTLER NATIONAL GC

This was the scene at Butler National Golf Club on the Monday of tournament week at the PGA Tour's Western Open. The course was ready for play by Friday and, even though more rains came on Saturday, it held up for 36 holes on Sunday.

tional flood could ever be duplicated in Florida, the lessons to be drawn from Miles' miraculous recovery could be applied to any disaster.

We have hurricanes and tornados in Florida, to say nothing of brushfires and sinkholes.

Planning, preparedness, humility, foresight and prayer was Miles' prescription. . . along with a lot of friends and a knack for taking advantage of modern technology.

- Be prepared. On the basis of a less severe flood in 1982, Miles was able to learn generally what would happen to his course when his creek overflowed its banks. He wrote a disaster-preparedness plan and filed it away on his computer. Included in the plan was a list of equipment that possibly would be needed to clean up afterwards.

He also created a chart which enabled him to forecast the eventual height of

floodwaters based on the amount of rainfall.

- Make a lot of friends. Since he knew he would need a lot of help if disaster should strike, Miles made a point of cultivating friendships with the local Civil Defense personnel and other officials in charge of disaster control. He made sure they understood his needs. . . and got to play his

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'He was waiting for my call, hoping I would be big enough to admit that I needed help'

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course occasionally.

• Cultivate the press. He took the initia-

tive in establishing good relations with local sports reporters. When disaster struck, they already understood the problems he

was facing. They became his allies instead of his enemies during the dreary days of around-the-clock cleanup.

• Ask for help. Don't try to handle a problem that is bigger than your resources. As soon as Miles realized the amount of equipment he would need for the massive cleanup effort, he called on one of his most influential members who owns a major construction company.

"He was waiting for me to call, hoping I would be big enough to admit I needed help," Miles recalls. "By morning, we had pumps and generators coming in from as far away as Omaha.

• Call on your peers. Superintendents at 12 neighboring courses sent their entire crews for several hours every day. Miles gave one of his senior assistants the full-time task as coordinator of the volunteer labor.

• Don't underestimate the damage. The people who pay the bills won't object if you finish the reconstruction project under

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- Document everything. Within three days after the Western Open was completed, Miles had several consultants, including representatives from the USGA Green Section, come in and survey the damage. He videotaped their comments, often asking them pointed questions as they explained why certain areas should be re-grassed or, in some cases, completely rebuilt.

"I got the idea for the videotape kind of at the last minute," Miles said. "But I thought it would help me explain to the board why we had to do certain things. So I asked the pro shop if I could borrow the camera they use to give lessons."

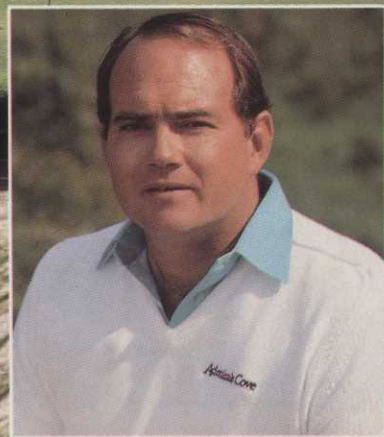
- Take advantage of computers. "I couldn't have drawn up my action plan or reconstruction plans if I hadn't had most of the data on the computer waiting to be used. I don't know how we ever got along without them."



Oscar Miles, golf course manager at Butler National GC, says superintendents should take advantage of modern technology — particularly computers and video cameras.

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