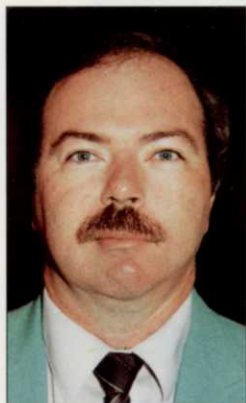


# At the mercy of Mother Nature

**‘ The biggest injustice is yet to unfold ’**

## Editorial License



Tom Benefield, CGCS  
Editor

Anyone who has seen recent newscasts can attest to the horrendous weather which has assaulted our nation. “The Mother of all Storms,” as one television station called it, rolled through our state with such fury and devastation that it brought back memories of the wrath of Hurricane Andrew. It will surely be remembered for a long time to come.

I think “the storm of the century” is a fitting end to an already disastrous winter season here in Florida, especially if you were trying to grow turfgrass. It began with the gruesome, depressing days of cloudiness and rain in December which continued into January. This fomented disease and thin turf around all sections of the Sunshine state.

Regardless of what you tried to do, the climatic conditions proved once again that you are at the mercy of Mother Nature. People raised cutting heights, sprayed greens two times per week with fungicide, spiked, top dressed and anything else you can think of to improve on a desperate situation, yet nothing seemed to help.

None of the superintendents I talked to expected to have summer rainstorms, humidity and overcasts skies in the middle of December.

The big problem is that these conditions are perfectly acceptable in the middle of July when all of the golfers are back up north. But when the summer conditions occur while they are down here, and they get exposed to what these conditions do to the turf, then that’s a whole different ballgame.

They have come to expect certain conditions during the winter when they are visiting here and any deviation from those conditions is difficult for them to understand.

And from the uproar which was created by mother nature, we find tremendous blame being laid at the feet of the golf course superintendent.

Fine, upstanding individuals who just in

November were doing a “great” job are now labeled and tagged as benign imbeciles incapable of the simplest tasks. This is an unfair and false accusation but nonetheless accurately reflects the sentiments of members.

The biggest injustice is yet to unfold. This will be the wide dismissal of superintendents this spring. I have no doubt that many of our members will be looking for new employment in a few months. Not because of their incompetence but because of the fickle nature of this business and the “one-upmanship” mentality of the members at the clubs they work for.

At a local superintendents’ meeting in March, the talk was all about the weather and the havoc it has created for golf courses. Only two people in the room said they had good greens, all the rest lamented the poor conditions of theirs and the same story was repeated by one after another. The conversation went on for hours with a sharing of ideas and information that might help someone in their situation.

It was heartwarming to experience the camaraderie of the people in the room and I left with a sense of pride to be a member of this association and in better spirits than when I had arrived.

The reason I felt better was I had heard for weeks from my golfers how much better the greens on all of the golf courses around us were. Well, it seems that all of the other superintendents were hearing the same things from their members and that their golf courses were the worst in the area. It seems that the truth of the matter lies somewhere between the two extremes.

From a member’s perspective, the notion that “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” was a tool they could use to flail away at their superintendent because conditions were not what they “used to be” for this time of year. ➤

While you're away from work, some of the darndest things can happen.



**‘ They make hasty judgments as to why the program isn’t working like it should. ’**

I have thought of this situation in light of how I relate to my children. I find myself having higher expectations of my children and requiring more of them than I do of my nephews.

I have a greater sense of pride and set higher standards for their activity and school work. I think members of our clubs view us in a similar light.

They have intense pride in their local clubs and, like me with my children, they have high expectations of the golf course. When these standards aren’t reached, they have a difficult time understanding why, and at times they make hasty

judgments as to why the program isn’t working like it should.

And this leads us to where we are today. With the exception of the “Storm of the Century,” the weather has been getting a little better each day. Who knows — with the right weather conditions and given enough time to get the golf courses back to the conditions desired, some of the superintendents who are “on the bubble” may be able to keep their jobs and their lives in place. Let’s hope so.

Until next time, may God bless and keep you safe.

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