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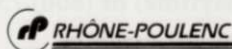
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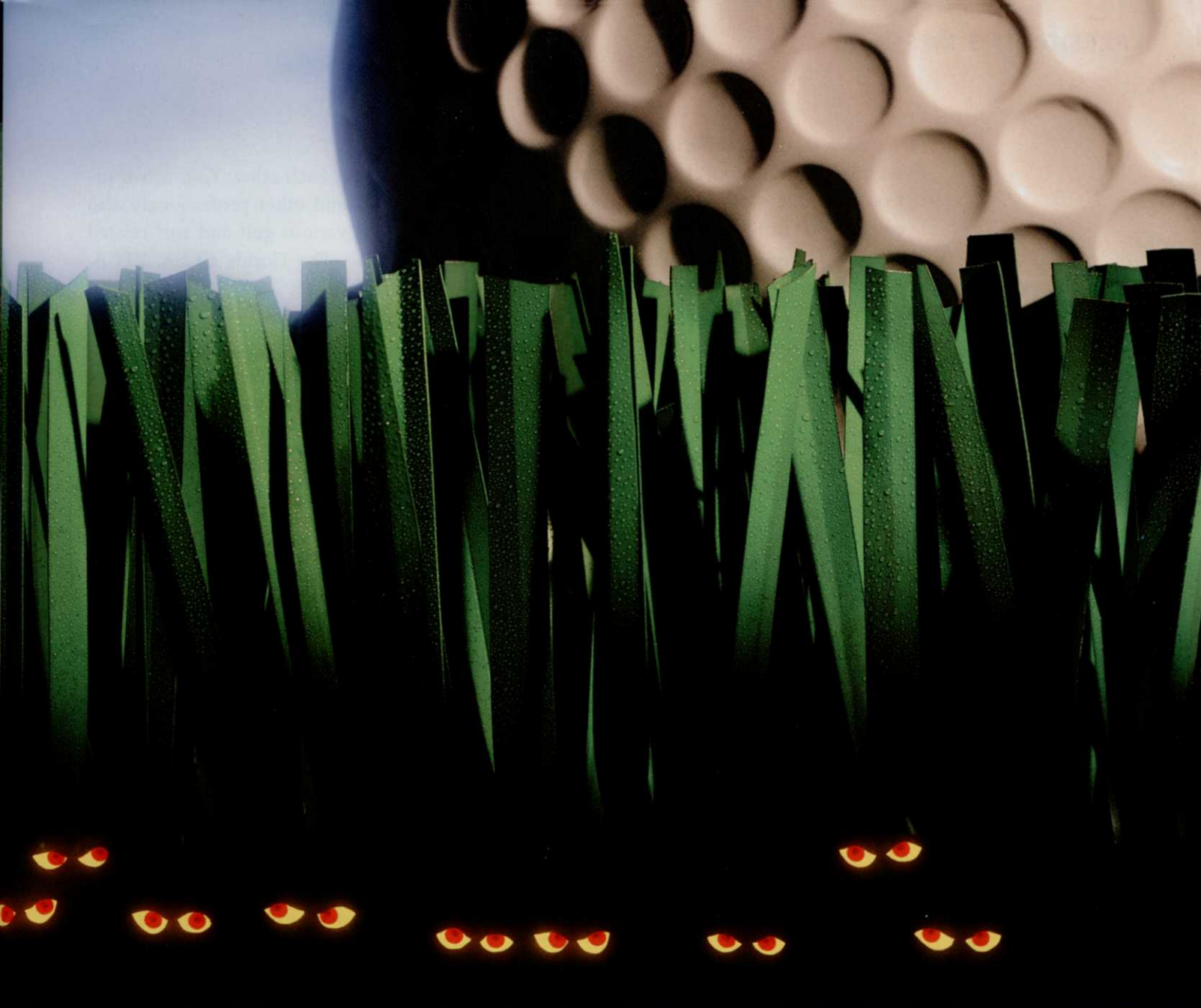
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As I sit down to write this President's message, my staff is out cleaning up the debris from the "killer storm" that ripped across the country March 12-13.

My golf course is a mess and looks as bad as it did after Hurricane Andrew, whose eye passed 70 miles south of here. We'll be cleaning up all week, but I feel extremely fortunate (again) when others so near suffered so much worse — Dan Jones, our Editor Emeritus from Banyan Golf Club, is only two miles from here and he has over 300 trees down and other serious damage from a tornado spawned by the storm. The thermometer is dropping,

and by tomorrow night we could reach the first freezing temperatures we've had in South Florida in over three years — a fitting finish to a strange and difficult golfing season.

For some superintendents, it may also mark the finish of their employment. Rumors and speculations are circulating about superintendents who may soon lose their jobs because of member unhappiness with course conditions this unusual and unpredictable winter season.

I received a call myself just this morning from the green committee chairman of a nearby club asking for help in finding a new superintendent.

It is unfortunate, unfair and ironic, that we are often the victims of our own professional expertise — our members have come to expect outstanding conditions at all times, believing us capable of circumventing even the powerful force of Mother Nature.

Our jobs have gotten tougher and more demanding year after year, and, other than ourselves, who can we count on to help us meet these challenges and remain among the

employed?

The answer? Each other. Your fellow superintendents and other professionals who belong to the various golf and turf-related associations — The Florida GCSA, FTGA, GCSAA, and USGA.

I've thought a lot about our professional associations since the GCSAA convention, and the message the membership was sending to the GCSAA Board and staff. Where would we be without these organizations?

Would we still be wearing overalls, working out of a barn, and jealously guarding our trade secrets for our personal job security? Would golf course maintenance have advanced to the high level it is today, without these professional associations pointing the way, providing education, funding research, and forging bonds of friendship and cooperation that last a lifetime?

It is hard for me to imagine a career in turf management without these associations. It is hard for me to imagine superintendents who fail to see the benefits of belonging to these associations.

The leadership of these organizations may move in directions that many members do not support, as demonstrated by the defeat of the GCSAA bylaw proposals, but this does not negate the overall positive contributions of the association. Neither does it negate the fact that everyone owes something to the profession that sustains him.

As we move forward with our professional association programs we need everyone to get involved. There are no free rides out there. If you're not a member of the FGCSA and FTGA then you should join today. Your support will help our industry to reach new heights and explore new directions for tomorrow's golf courses. Do your duty and call 1-800-732-6053 and 1-800-882-6721.

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No free rides out there



Mark Jarrell, CGCS
President
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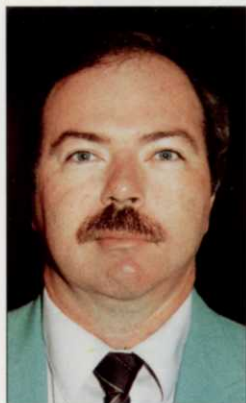
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At the mercy of Mother Nature

‘ 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. ➤

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**‘ 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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