

Hurricane Bob leaves Cape Cod bent and brown; grounds crews still cleaning up

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on Buzzards Bay. New Seabury Country Club, a week away from hosting an American Junior Golf Association Tournament, was left with as much as a foot of sand and seaweed and another foot of salt water.

Hyannisport Club lost five greens to severe salt damage despite hectic — and at first promising — efforts to save them.

Thousands of trees — including 500 at Kittansett Club and 800 at New Seabury CC alone — were snapped or felled by the winds.

Woods Hole Golf Club saw almost the entire stand of trees lining the 12th hole come down.

New Seabury CC faced the most immediate problem — preparing for the tournament. The eye of the hurricane passed directly over the front nine of the facility's famous Championship course, depositing thousands of yards of sand and pockets of water, completely covering the cart path that runs along the ocean, and changing the shape of the 2nd and 3rd holes.

The storm struck in the morning and was gone in hours. In the midst of it, superintendent Tommy Colombo drove to the 1st tee and saw "the 2nd and 3rd fairways were now ocean, with waves crashing down. The 2nd through the 8th holes were totally inundated."

Colombo and Danny Coon, supervisor of golf operations and management director, set an emergency plan in motion.

Before nightfall, the course's five 300-gallon-per-minute pumps were draining salt water from a three-acre fresh-water pond and the fairways. Wednesday night a 1,200-gpm and a 800-gpm pump were pumping the ocean back into Nantucket Sound.

Assessing damage to the rest of the 36 holes with retired University of Massachusetts Professor Joseph Troll, Colombo was "kind of in shock." They found tall pine trees toppled everywhere. The Challenger course appeared relatively unharmed, but the front nine of the Championship course needed major help. The entire front nine, except the 1st and 9th holes, was submerged. The 2nd and 3rd fairways were ruined, and the 8th green was an island.

The storm had caused an estimated \$350,000 damage to the course — \$122,000 on the 3rd hole alone. But the front nine was covered by a catastrophic insurance policy.

Blessed with a 100-man crew made up of waiters, busboys and lifeguards from the club, local contractors and his groundskeepers, Colombo moved to neutralize the three threats to the turf — salt, sand and standing water.

At dawn the next day the crew worked to remove the water, then shoveled and bulldozed as much as two feet of salt-laden sand back onto sand dunes at the ocean's edge.

Next, gypsum was spread over the course, helping to leach the salt through the soil profile and limit salt damage. The greens were then watered twice that day and the next. The quick work saved the greens.

In mid-September trucks were hauling in new root-zone mix for the 2nd and 3rd fairways. Sodding had to be done to be ready for yet another competition, the Massachusetts Mid-Amateur Tournament, scheduled Sept. 30 to Oct. 1.

Colombo said that before the storm: "I realized it (front nine) was vulnerable. Everyone always wondered what would happen if a really big storm hit. Now they know."



The front nine holes of New Seabury's Blue Course is flooded with water following Hurricane Bob, which passed over Cape Cod on Aug. 19. Photo by Steve Heaslip/Cape Cod Times

Compared to Bob, Hurricane Gloria in 1985 had only flooded about 60 percent of the 3rd fairway and it was wet for only one day, Colombo said. "No comparison. Here (Bob) there was so much water and you can only do so much, so fast."

ELSEWHERE

Meanwhile, at Kittansett Club, superintendent Lenny Blodgett faced a massive task of his own.

"Water was five, six feet over the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 17th and 18th fairways. The 1st, 5th, 6th and 17th were destroyed, and parts of the other two," Blodgett said.

Since he has no irrigation he had to rely on rainfall. Even though Hyannisport Club, just 25 miles to the east, received 1-1/4 inches of rain, Kittansett got none.

"I'm slicing, seeding in, putting on gypsum and a lot of starter high phosphates on the fairways, if it ever does rain," Blodgett said.

He said the greens were under water for a day, until the tides were out. "Then it was all hand-shoveling. We had seven to eight inches of debris on all the greens. The salt killed them."

Blodgett spike seeded eight to 10 different ways into six ruined greens and on damaged tee areas. And at nights he had "50 to 60 people in working on the course — loggers, loaders, backhoes. I had to rebuild the 3rd hole with cranes."

He used a blend of ryegrasses because they need less water than bentgrass.

"I'm waiting for nature," he said. "I'm watering lightly three or four cycles a day. I've put on Subdue so I don't get damping off on the seed."

"I've had a lot of coastal storms but not this bad, except Gloria because Gloria didn't have rain afterwards. If I had had rain it would have saved a lot. Plus I was out of power so I couldn't run my booster pumps."

Golf pro Tom Shea said everything "10 feet and below" was damaged in the pro shop and cart barn.

The course was closed until nine holes were opened Aug. 31.

Superintendent Charlie Passios said besides losing 300 trees, his Hyannisport Club had "severe salt damage on five greens that were under water."

He said: "We put down gypsum, prayed for rain, got 1-1/4 inches of rain the next day. We watered more; aerated once with big tines to

pull out material at a pretty wide space; aerated again with real fine, solid tines to poke more holes, get more water in it and close in the bigger holes a little bit."

But, a couple of days later — "just when it looked like the course would recover" — the damage showed.

That left Passios, assistant Mark Egan and their crew working to restore the lost turf.

OTHER COURSES WERE LUCKIER

Henry Coffin III, superintendent at Sankaty Head Golf Club in Siasconset on Nantucket Island, said the handful of courses on the island were spared serious damage because they are on the high side of the island.

"We had high winds and all our trees turned brown from the salt spray. But we lost just three big pine trees," Coffin said.

The Taunton River overflowed and submerged Fall River Country Club's 10th fairway, half the 4th fairway, and the 3rd fairway halfway up the apron of the green.

Thomas Ohlson's crew treated for salt, watered a lot, and got their hoped-for rain for two days after Hurricane Bob.

In Maine, the storm mostly left behind limbs and other debris from trees.

One major exception was Falmouth Country Club, where superintendent Kevin Ross and his crew had to contend with an overflowing Presumpscot River that inundated the green half of the 13th hole and one-third the tee half of the 14th hole.

The major financial damage, Ross said, was done to his irrigation control system. Three satellite clocks, costing \$1,300 apiece, were submerged and one controller ruined.

Beyond that, Falmouth suffered severe bunker washouts, some cart path destruction and loss of 75 to 100 trees that were snapped or uprooted.

Just when the water subsided from the fairways 48 hours after a storm, a rainstorm dropped another inch and a half of water and "compounded everything," Ross said. "We were back in the slosh again."

He said his crews had to wash off silt from the river with high-pressure hoses, then aerate heavily.

He said cleanup probably won't be complete until December.

Elsewhere in Maine, superintendent Gregg Grenert of Samoset Resort golf course said, "We dodged the bullet." Samoset sits on the ocean's edge in Rockport.

Val Halla escapes Bob but drubbed by twister

What the Weather Bureau labeled a two-minute "wind burst" was to Val Halla Golf Club course superintendent Jim Hodge and staffers Al Swanson and Tom Hansen a scary brush with disaster.

The rain and 100 mile-an-hour wind storm, hard on the heels of Hurricane Bob, claimed between 750 and 1,000 trees at the Cumberland, Maine, 18-hole public course.

Its timing couldn't have been worse — at 5:45 p.m. Wednesday with a three-day member-guest tournament booked Friday through Sunday.

Hodge's sole concern just prior to that terrifying experience was for the safety of his crewmen. The sky was ominous as Hodge sped out on the course to pick up his men.

Rain clouds were breathing down their necks as they raced for the shelter of the maintenance building.

That hardly was a secure sanctuary. A tree toppled onto the building. While the trio pondered their fate, the winds suddenly stilled.

Surveying the damage a few minutes later with course manager Bob Leighton, tourney cancellation seemed the only answer.

They reckoned without club members. The next morning, 30 volunteers showed up at daylight to begin the work of restoration. Damage was greatest on the right side of the ninth hole, about 200 trees wiped out.

Members Bob Anderson and Dane Brimigion brought in heavy equipment, tractors and chain saws appeared, and tree wood was cut and stored.

Hodge marked off more red hazards, and a frantic 12-hour work day paid off.

Twenty volunteers Friday morning finished the cleanup job, the tourney was on, and all went well.

By comparison, Hurricane Bob was a zephyr, uprooting only 100 trees and washing out culverts and bridges.

There may be a slight bright side to the wind strike Hodge dubbed "After The Storm." Federal disaster funds may be forthcoming.

Hodge and aides won't soon forget, though, the "Sheet of White" rain chasing them to cover.

Nominations sought for turf awards

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — The Sports Turf Managers Association is seeking nominations for its annual awards program. Awards will be presented at its annual meeting here Dec. 4-7.

Award categories are: Football Field of the Year; Soccer Field of the Year; Outstanding Commercial Affiliate; Excellence in Research, and Lawn Ranger Award for best groundskeeper.

Sports Turf Managers Association membership is an eligibility requirement. Nominations should be submitted to Greg Petry, Waukegan Park District, P.O. Box 708, Waukegan, Ill. 60079. Attn: STMA Awards.