

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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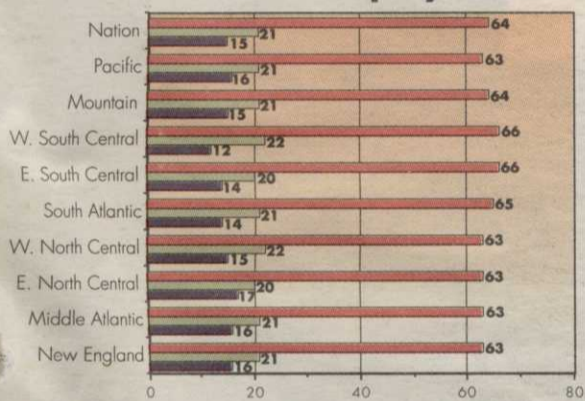
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Americans were asked: "If there were more opportunities to play golf in your community, would you be more interested in the game of golf? Here are their responses by region."

Source: NGF

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Flood devastates Texas courses

By Peter Blais

Jack and Melissa Fletcher stood along the banks of the Brazos River Christmas Eve watching the rain-swollen waters rise at the rate of an inch per hour and drown their nine-hole course.

"It died a slow death," recalled Jack, who helps daughter Melissa manage Valley Lodge Golf Club in Simonton, Texas, 30 miles west of Houston. "It was a very helpless feeling."

Valley Lodge was one of many courses suffering major damage from the heavy rains that deluged eastern Texas in late December and

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Retreating flood waters left behind massive debris throughout Ridgewood Country Club in Waco, Texas, including the 10th fairway. Photo courtesy of Mandel Brockinton

Strategic plan critical challenge to club managers' association

By Peter Blais

Jack Sullivan found his bride and a career on the golf course.

The new Club Managers Association of America president was a high school teacher in Fairfield, Iowa, when he met wife, Darcy. Darcy's house bordered the fifth tee at Fairfield Golf & Country Club.

The two played a lot of golf together and Jack eventually got a part-time job as the club's bar manager. He quickly became the club's assistant manager and his career was off and running.

That career has taken him to The Whiconda Club in Des Moines, Iowa, Nakoma Golf Club in Madison, Wis. and his present employer, Grosse Pointe Yacht Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.

"This is the first time I've been at a club without a golf course," said Sullivan, who came aboard Grosse Pointe in 1987. "Basically, I've traded in the golf course for a harbor. Where I used to worry about green speeds, weather conditions affecting the course and helping the superintendent deal with turf diseases, now I worry about water levels, how

weather conditions affect the fleet and helping the harbor master plan boating activities.

"I grew up in the golf business as a manager and I closely follow the golf industry. I'm still a golfer, although my game has suffered from not having a course out the back door. My handicap used to be in single digits. Now it's up around 18.

"As CMAA president, I represent the entire club industry. Two-thirds of our members manage country clubs with golf courses. As the association goes through our strategic planning process over the next 18 months, what we do will be strongly dictated by the golf industry."

Completing that strategic plan will be Sullivan's primary goal during his



Jack Sullivan

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Wetlands manual in midst of flux

From staff reports

The long-awaited revision of the Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands remains on hold and developers have been told to disregard the 1989 manual in favor of the 1987 version.

Mike Kelly, vice president of Williamsburg Environmental Group in Williamsburg, Va., said a revised manual probably will not be completed for another six to 12 months.

"The reason is that environmentalists are up in arms over Bush's wetlands plan," Kelly said. "Hysteria has caused pressure to re-evaluate changes."

Meanwhile, he said, a bill in Congress, introduced by Louisiana Rep. Jimmy Hayes and co-sponsored by more than 145 congressmen, is "moving slowly through the process." Hayes' bill would revamp the whole Clean Water Action Section 404 program and override regulations instituted by government agencies.

The Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Soil Conservation Service — which

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Stricter pesticide laws in the making

By Peter Blais

A growing number of communities are proposing laws restricting pesticides since last summer's U.S. Supreme Court ruling that federal law cannot stop local governments from regulat-

ing their use.

The result could be thousands of unscientific, contradictory regulations making it harder for golf course superintendents and others in the turf industry do their job, according to those supporting

recently proposed legislation allowing federal law to preempt local ordinances.

"We are pushing for uniform pesticide laws imposed by federal and state governments based on good science,

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Flood waters jeopardize Texas golf courses

Continued from page 1

early July. The course was expanding to 18 holes when the flood hit. All nine existing greens were eight to 10 feet under water, he said.

"Fortunately we had just cleared and staked the new nine. If we were farther along, it could have been a lot worse," the elder Fletcher said.

As it is, the Fletchers will have to indefinitely delay work on the new nine they had hoped to open in June. The course was not insured for flood damage, although they expect some federal disaster relief.

The owners plan to wash the silt off the existing greens, using an oil field vacuum to help, and re-open as soon as possible as a nine-hole operation, he added.

"It's a matter of economics," Fletcher said.

EFFECTS FAR-REACHING

Downriver courses, like Valley Lodge, were hit particularly hard as water managers were forced to open upriver dams before they burst.

"Lake Waco is the major reservoir in this area," said Jim Moore, director of the U.S. Golf Association Green Section's Mid-Continent Regional office in Waco. "The previous record was 18 feet above normal. It got as high as 33 feet during the worst of the storms."

Stephen F. Austin Golf Club along the Brazos River 50 miles west of Houston received just five inches of rain, according to superintendent Doug Brown. But water rushing down from the north raised the river level 20 feet, flooding seven greens, five tees and parts of every fairway.

Brown lost 60 feet of turf and earth behind one green and won't



know whether it will need rebuilding until water levels drop. Other greens had as much as five inches of silt and were being washed off with high-pressure hoses attached to the irrigation system's quick couplers.

Much of the over-seeded ryegrass still looks green, Brown reported. But he won't be able to fully assess damage until the underlying common Bermudagrass fairways and Tifdwarf greens come out of dormancy this spring.

It's been a tough start for Brown, who took over the course 2-1/2 years ago. He resurfaced nine greens that summer, only to lose them to a winter frost. Now the flood may take several more.

"This is the worst flooding I've ever seen," said Brown, who has

worked on and off at Stephen F. Austin since 1976.

Pecan Grove Country Club in Richmond was another Houston-area course suffering significant damage. Eighteen inches of rain fell on the course from just before Christmas through Jan. 6, according to superintendent Noe Villarreal.

Standing water caused large turf areas to simply rot, he said. The course had been officially closed 22 days through Jan. 6, although many of the club's 1,400 members turned out to play during the infrequent sunny days.

Villarreal said he will not replant the damaged over-seeded ryegrass, poa annua and bentgrass. He will instead wait until the Bermudagrass starts greening up



At left, workers at Stephen F. Austin Golf Club tackle cleanup on the 12th green where floods left a pile of silt and sand from one to 30 inches deep. Above, water reached five feet high in the maintenance building, ruining sensitive computer and controller equipment and records at Ridgewood Country Club in Waco, Texas.

in late February or early March to take corrective action.

"The best thing for me to do is wait," he said. "I won't oversee because first, it's too expensive, and second, it would just be competition for the Bermudagrass."

Houston wasn't the only area ravaged by floods.

Farther north in Austin, Onion Creek Country Club had two tee boxes and a green washed away. Nine other greens were submerged and five may need rebuilding due to silt damage, according to superintendent Larry Clanton.

Bloated by 15 inches of rain in 4-1/2 days, Onion Creek claimed 50 of the course's 57 sand bunkers and a bridge.

Clanton pegged the clean-up costs at \$218,000, not including

the five additional greens that may or may not need rebuilding.

"We lost our maintenance building in a fire in August of 1989. Then we lost 12 greens to the cold weather that winter. Now this. We've had our share of calamities the past few years," Clanton said.

Waco, midway between Dallas and Austin, didn't escape Mother Nature's wrath. Located along the shores of Lake Waco, the rising waters covered four greens at Ridgewood Country Club, leaving one submerged for three weeks, reported superintendent Mandel Brockinton.

The lake deposited debris two feet deep in a 2,000-yard-long, 10-yard-wide swath. It included boats, trash, fishing equipment, logs and silt, Brockinton said.

The water also rose seven feet high on the walls of the maintenance building, destroying the irrigation system's computer and controllers, all of Brockinton's records, \$8,000 worth of tools and \$24,000 worth of siding. The course's three pumps were submerged, although Brockinton hopes they can be rebuilt rather than replaced.

Assessing damage to the bentgrass greens and Bermudagrass fairways had to wait until the waters subsided, Brockinton said.

However, the course's bentgrass nursery, which germinated the day before flood waters hit, was destroyed, he added.

SILT A KILLER

While the immediate damage to these and other courses is terrible, the biggest costs could still lie ahead, the USGA's Moore said. Silt is the culprit.

Once in the green, silt works its way into the upper root zone and forms an impervious layer. Water can't penetrate it and even greens built to USGA specifications will drain poorly.

Superintendents will do their best

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Cornell investigates Milorganite's effectiveness vs. deer

Research has shown that the fertilizer Milorganite may be used to discourage deer browsing.

Milorganite may offer some relief from deer damage and applied research has been initiated to qualify the product's effectiveness in an urban area where deer predation is a problem.

A study at Cornell University's Cooperative Extension Service in Dutchess County, N.Y., is attempting to quantify the result of using Milorganite as an effective deer deterrent. Thus far, the study

indicates it is effective in deterring deer from browsing on valuable ornamental plants and shrubs.

Milwaukee has produced the 100-percent natural organic fertilizer product, a co-product of the city's wastewater treatment process.

Initial results of the Cornell deer study show Milorganite has deterred deer from browsing on Hosta and Taxus (yews) when the fertilizer is applied around the target shrubs' base. The rate of application is at five pounds per 100 square feet. Milorganite is broadcast on the soil



surface around the target plant material.

According to the study, Milorganite should be applied one to two times per month and after each snowfall in the winter months. The researchers feel the scent of the product may be the reason the deer choose to browse elsewhere.

Les Hulcoop, Cooperative Extension agent for Dutchess County, who is captaining the study, said, "The deer are definitely staying away from the Milorganite applications at this time. We feel some of the commercially labeled treatments on the

market do quite well in checking deer damage, but the plants grow out of the protection during spring and summer. Additionally, the users do not like the white film some of these treatments leave on the growing plant material."

Many of the deer repellent treatments lose their effectiveness in winter after temperatures fall below 10 degrees F.

The study will also assess predation control if Milorganite is hung in bags from the target plants throughout the winter.

Flood

Continued from page 26

to wash off and aerify through the fine silt and clay deposits. But there is no way to clean it all away and aerifying affects just 5 to 7 percent of a green's surface area, Moore said.

If this summer is wet, water will pool on the silt-laden greens. If it's a dry summer, the silt's effects could be masked. But the silt will remain in the soil profile, moving lower as continued top dressing adds an average quarter-inch per year to the green's height.

"In Kansas, for instance, a soil profile will show a dust storm that deposited large amounts of silt 20 years ago," Moore explained. "Eventually a wet summer will come along and a course will develop black layer problems from the silt, no matter how much the superintendent tries to wash off the silt and aerify his greens now."

Stripping off the top inch of greens material, fumigating and then replanting with sod, sprigs or seed is the only surefire solution, Moore said.

Unfortunately, it is expensive and means closing the course or using temporary greens for many weeks. That's a tough sell to members or owners.

Stripping in the spring would be best for Bermudagrass greens and would mean closing eight to 12 weeks, Moore said.

Waiting until fall, with frequent aerifying throughout spring and summer, would work best for bentgrass, the USGA specialist noted.

"A good superintendent could start a two-acre bentgrass nursery this spring and have sod ready to transplant come fall. It's a great opportunity to convert to a better variety of bentgrass and get rid of things like goosegrass, poa or whatever.

"A good sodding job could have the greens ready for play in six weeks. Seeding would mean waiting a lot longer, perhaps the next May. But seeding is better agronomically than sodding.

"Every course is different and there is no one solution. But members tend to react better to closing the course because of major problems, like floods, than they do for the routine stuff. The problems are so obvious, they can understand it."

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