



TORNADO RIPS MONTEREY PENINSULA

A golfer (left) negotiates a newly formed sidehill lie after a freak tornado uprooted 30-50 trees on the Old Del Monte golf course in Monterey, Calif., Sunday evening, Dec. 6. One of the larger uprooted trees (right) dwarfs a group of golfers. The twister damaged the 1st, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th holes, according to course personnel. No estimates of the cost to repair the course, owned by Pebble Beach Co., were available.

Six-year drought continues to plague Western United States golf courses

By PETER BLAIS

The early-season precipitation news has been positive for Southern California — site of this year's GCSAA international show — although the six-year drought is far from over.

The Southern California Metropolitan Water District reported precipitation was slightly above the normal 12 to 14 inches for the region for the year ending Sept. 30.

Additionally, forecasters predicted

December weather patterns would bring heavy rainfalls to the coast, an encouraging start to the area's prime four-month wet season.

But two-thirds of Southern California's water is imported, according to water district spokesman Bob Gomperz. And there the news is mixed.

"We've been told we'll receive as much as the aqueducts can handle from the Colorado River basin. But Northern California [primarily dependent on Sierra Nevada Mountains snowpack] is giving us just 10 percent of what we requested,"

Gomperz said.

The Northern California allotment figure is preliminary. It could go higher when final figures are released in May, particularly if heavy early-December snows, which helped snowpack levels reach 50 percent of normal, continue through the winter, Gomperz said.

Does that have the golf industry ready to burst into a chorus of "Ding dong the drought is dead?"

No way, Dorothy.

"It's rained heavily in spots. But the

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West's dry spell expected to last into foreseeable future

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idea the drought is over is a misconception of the media," said Ray Davies, superintendent at Virginia Country Club in Huntington Beach and past president of the Southern California Golf Course Superintendents Association.

For example, Virginia CC received 1/2-inch of rain in a recent 24-hour storm, Davies said. Courses 40 miles north in the Los Angeles Basin got 6 to 8 inches. But most of the water in both areas simply ran off into the ocean, he said.

And since no major water retention projects have been built since the late 1960s, most heavy rains will continue to simply wash into the ocean, he added.

"California has a permanent water shortage. We simply don't have the capacity to store what we get," Davies said.

Bob Thomas, editor of the Southern California Golf Association magazine *Fore*, said the heavy rains simply bought the area another year without severe restrictions rather than freeing it from the drought. Watering restrictions were lifted this fall in Santa Barbara where water supplies were seriously low.

"What we desperately need is a few 20-inch snowfalls in the mountains to build up the snowpack," Thomas said.

The news is worse farther north and east, according to U.S. Golf Association agronomist Larry Gilhuly. Golf courses on city water in Seattle and Portland were restricted to watering just tees and greens this summer and fall, he said.

"That was never the case in L.A.," he recalled. "Every time I drive through Northern California, I can't believe how low Lake Shasta is.

"It's down 40 to 50 feet. That's a major water source for that part of the state."

Farther east in Las Vegas, the water district has raised the price of water significantly to curb water use, Gilhuly said. Nevada Gov. Bob Miller declared 14 of the state's 17 counties drought disaster areas.

The Wall Street Journal reported recently that Idaho Power Corp. — which serves Idaho, Oregon and Nevada — will spend \$90 million more this year to burn coal because less water in the rivers meant its hydroelectric facilities ran below capacity. It will pass that added cost on to customers.

"Rising electric rates is a problem I hear at almost every course," Gilhuly said.

The same article suggested this drought may not be unusual. Studying tree rings, scientists believe decades-long dry spells may have occurred in past centuries and that the 1900s have actually been a wetter-than-usual time.

While that may give most Western states cause to dread the fu-

ture, in Arizona they are looking forward to it.

Despite being mired in a 30-year dry spell, the state goal is to have no further depletion of the aquifer by the year 2025, according to Arizona Golf Association Director Ed Gowan.

The golf industry has moved away from a confrontational attitude with regulators to a cooperative one. For their part, regulators approach the industry with a much more open mind than

they did 10 years ago.

With the two working together, Gowan said the no-depletion goal is attainable, especially with the amount of effluent available. Ninety-five percent of the state's waste water presently is not re-used, he said.

Projects are underway statewide to get that water to where it is needed, such as a nearly completed 35-mile pipeline that will pass by Desert Mountain near Scottsdale.

The 12 inches of rain Phoenix received in 1992 was twice its average annual rainfall. Tucson was somewhat drier, but still above average.

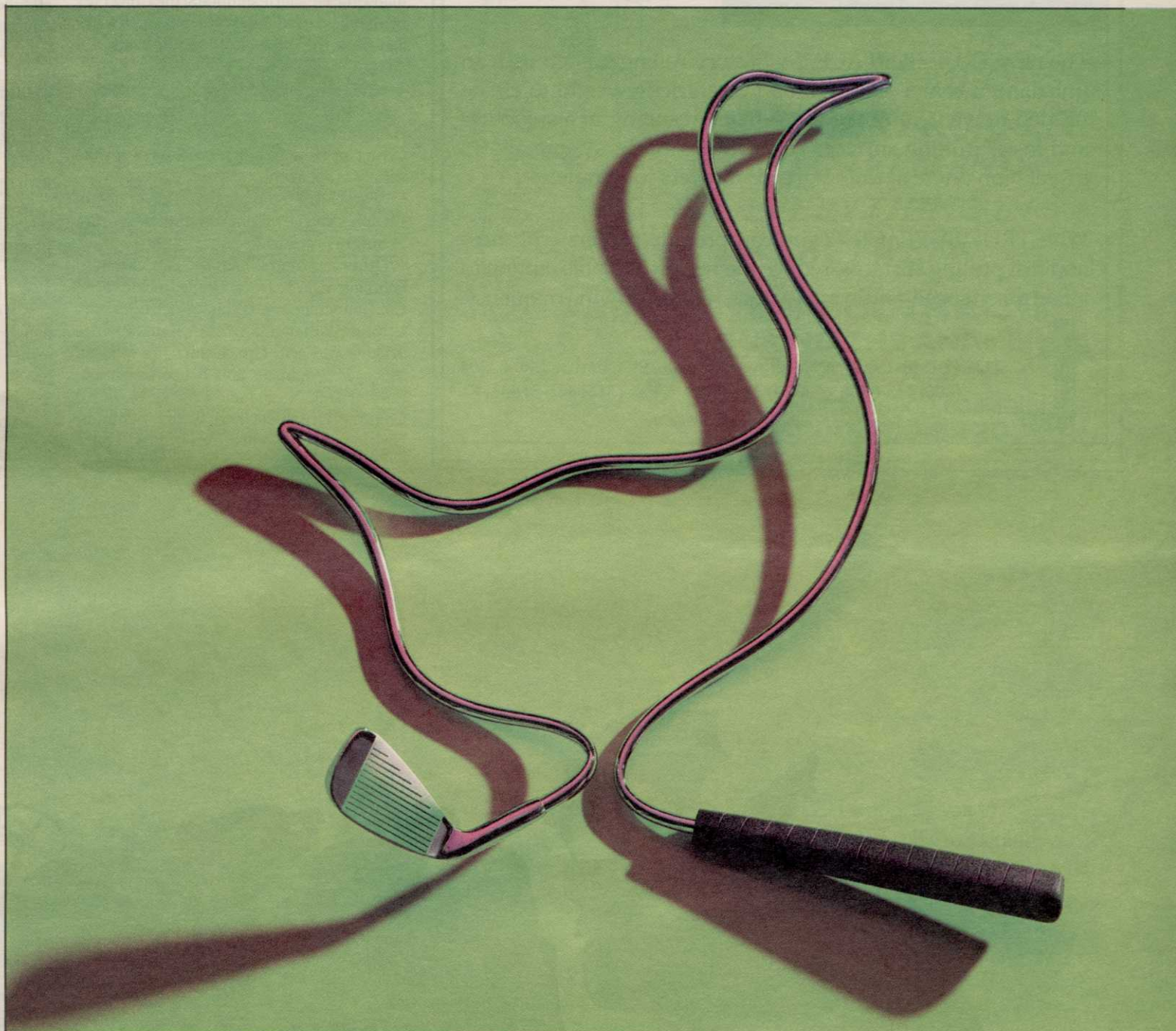
Another heavier-than-normal year of rainfall will get most of the state's reservoirs and water tables back to normal, he added.

"There is plenty of water. The major issue now is quality. We need to make sure the chemicals put down on the ground don't contaminate the water," Gowan said.

Missouri wetland report ready

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Division of Geology and Land Survey has released a report titled "Missouri Wetlands: A Vanishing Resource." The report regards the status of Missouri wetlands, as well as the programs and activities affecting them.

It is available at no cost from Jane Epperson, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, 1-800-334-6946.



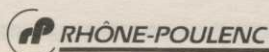
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