

***Editor's note:** Joel Jackson wrote this column from his Orlando office before Hurricanes Frances and Ivan hit the southern United States. By the time you receive the magazine, there's a chance another hurricane may have hit the South.*

**A**ugust's Hurricane Charley was a blowout like 12 years ago when Andrew, a Category 5 storm, leveled the town of Homestead and battered South Miami so badly that construction codes were upgraded and insurance companies raised deductibles. Andrew's effects were felt as far away as Palm Beach and Naples as it crossed 50 miles of swamp before exiting into the Gulf of Mexico. Charley instead took the scenic route and left chaos in his wake.

A Category 4 storm, Charley sustained 100 mph winds as it traveled 140 miles across the peninsula, from Punta Gorda to Daytona Beach. Damage along the path was similar to Andrew's, but it affected more communities. It took two weeks to restore power to most of the towns and cities. Power companies made Herculean efforts to restore service, but some companies did not have solid disaster plans in place.

The monumental task of collecting and disposing of the storm debris has overtaxed the infrastructure of local county governments. Some counties had to delay the opening of the new school year, and upcoming primary election dates and sites are in question. Major intersections were battle zones as people forgot the four-way stop rule when the power is out to traffic signals. Lack of preparation magnified inconvenience for many and, without electricity, tempers grew short in the heat.

Hurricane Charley hit superintendents hard and proved that we often still serve at the pleasure of the weather. People who have survived natural disasters can relate to what's facing residents and golf course maintenance crews. Stories have emerged about compassionate volunteers, many in the golf industry, who showed up with extra chain saws, food and ice, and — most importantly — helping hands to clean up and rebuild. They far outweigh the inevitable price gouging and looting a few scumbags couldn't pass up.

Communities and courses near the eye wall on Boca Grande, Captiva and Pine Islands and

# Mother Nature Still Rules in Golf

BY JOEL JACKSON



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in Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte were devastated. Clean-up crews were still digging out the Burnt Store Marina & Country Club on Pine Island two weeks after the storm. Trees on the barrier islands were defoliated and tall trees were reduced to huge stumps with only twisted and broken branches remaining. The tidal surge deposited sand, silt and salt on some courses.

There are a couple of stories about the clueless or insensitive folks that showed up for their Saturday morning tee time at 6:20 a.m. the morning after.

Then there was one fellow ranting about how the grounds staff needed to start propping up those downed trees immediately or they would die. During his rant, people held back the superintendent, who wanted to hurt the guy. The golfer was completely oblivious to the fact that some crew members toiling long hours in the hot sun to clean up the course had lost their homes in the storm.

Mother Nature once again displayed her raw power and put asunder things that man had built in the blink of an eye. Humanity's influence on natural systems is often given more importance and/or blame than it deserves. The 1980 Mt. St. Helen's volcanic eruption comes to mind. Its zone of destruction still exists 24 years later for everyone to see, and people had nothing to do with it either.

We should always strive to minimize any possible negative effects on the environment from human enterprise and development. But people must often stand by helplessly to watch, wait and hope that we will survive when nature decides to strike its own mighty blow upon the land. Remember Charley and the other hurricanes, and keep your suffering colleagues in your thoughts.

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