

# Volunteers band together, clean up course

By John Miller

Staff Writer

Never underestimate a golfer's passion for his or her sport.

Volunteers from throughout the commu-

nity converged on the Torrington Municipal Golf Course Wednesday to begin the daunting task of cleaning up and refurbishing the back nine of the course. Several fairways

and a tee box were severely damaged when the over-abundant North Platte River flooded parts of the course in June.

"Nobody's being paid to do any of this," volunteer and golf junkie Rick Breedlove said. "People are here because they love this place and they want to try to make it right again."

About 25 volunteers, mostly golf regulars, joined forces with the course's paid maintenance crews clearing away fallen trees and debris. Two of the volunteers, Bret VanRensselaer and Tom Feeser, brought in their own backhoes to assist the effort.

"I don't mind doing whatever it takes," VanRensselaer, a course regular since

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Photo/ John Miller

Bret VanRensselaer donates his time and backhoe Wednesday to help clean up the flooding aftermath at the Torrington Municipal Golf Course.

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# Volunteers: Clean up course

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2007, said. "I just want to be able to get back out playing."

Donating one's time and energy is one thing, but providing the use of a very expensive piece of construction equipment speaks to a whole other level of commitment.

"When you got a guy like Bret who just shows up with a backhoe, his fuel, his dime, his time," Breedlove said. "Some of us, its just maybe our way of giving back a little."

"There are a dozen trees that they're helping us get out of here," course manager and PGA pro Dave Dent said. "The ground got so soft, the wind came up and pushed a dozen trees over."

Dent is dashing from place to place in a golf cart trying to coordinate the best use of the volunteers

and employees he has on hand. With the myriad of tasks looming ahead for him and his maintenance crew, it behooves him to accomplish as much as possible while he has the extra help.

The fairway grass leading to the 15th hole is thin, yellowed and lifeless, drowned by a lake of stagnant water that overtook much of the back nine holes at the course. Leaves cover the ground while the surrounding trees don't appear to have lost any of their foliage. Dent stops the cart to illustrate how the flooding began.

"It came in and filled up these flues," Dent said, referring to creases in the earth where water started pooling. "Then it backed up because it couldn't go anywhere, and this was a river," he said, referring to

the entire 15th fairway. "At one point, the deepest part was three feet."

Dent said the 15th and 11th fairways, as well as part of the 14th and 16th were destroyed. Only one tee box was damaged, and none of the putting greens were damaged.

"I just don't quite understand the leaves," Dent said. "It's got to be because of the water and the heat, those two things together."

Maintenance employee Barry Jones believes the depth of the water coupled with the high temperatures and the length of time the grass was submerged left a large layer of silt and that nothing short of total excavation and replanting is necessary.

Dent doesn't dispute this notion, but remains optimistic the course will at least be

partially intact before summer's end.

"The entire course being open this year is not likely, but the opportunity is there to get some of it opened," he said. "What we'll probably do is open 10,11,12 and 13, leave 14 and 15 down and then go over to 16,17 and 18."

In the meantime, the volunteers are a welcome site to all of the course employees, who have worked extremely hard to keep the golf course a viable recreational activity in spite of circumstances.

"Craig Sandlain is the reason, of course with the rest of our staff, that this place is staying alive," Dent said of the course's irrigation technician. "And it's awesome to have these volunteers come out and do their thing."