

From the Sidelines



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No escape from Mother Nature

MY LOCAL DOUBLE A HARRISBURG SENATORS made the Eastern League playoffs last summer and earned some home games at cozy Metro Bank Park, which sits on an island in the middle of the Susquehanna River. Tropical Storm Lee had other plans however and unleashed enough rain in early September to cause serious river flooding, forcing their entire playoff series to be contested in Richmond, VA.

The Mid-Atlantic region has seen record rainfall this year and it's not over yet. Plenty of fields have suffered damage and anyone relying on natural drainage has seen a ton of wet ground for months. The sun was a stranger for sustained stretches here.

Over-the-top weather across our country has been relentless for so many seasons now that perhaps we should start considering the new normal is intense weather and lots of it. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wildfires, earthquakes—it seems like most of America has been nailed by an uncontrollable fit of nature over the past few years.

In Texas the scourge has been drought. I asked Jim Wiggins, a good friend of this magazine and the athletic grounds supervisor for the Tomball School District, north of Houston, how bad has it been?

"It has been real bummer of a summer down here! Since April 15 until last weekend (when we received 3 inches) our total rain has been 10.5 inches. We have been on water rationing all summer and with the opening of our second high school in August we have really had to plot and plan to get the eight new fields adequate water," he replied.

"We are able to irrigate and have been all summer and with some help from the MUD district at the new school. We have somehow made it through these harsh times. We set records almost daily and weekly for highest temps ever, 31 days of over 100 degrees, set the record for consecutive 100-degree days at 24 days, and was the driest summer of all time with 5.60 inches received from May through September.

"We also set the record for the all-time hottest day in city history August 27 with a high of 109 and a low of 81. Overall our 28 fields have made it through these radical days, [but] it was really tough at the new high school because they had just been sprigged in early spring and were still in a grow-in period. Even with rationing we used about 1.7 million gallons in August on those eight fields. Thank goodness for our Hunter Irrigation systems they have helped us make it through these 5 months and counting of drought.

"We just need to have all the rain systems this winter pushed down here to our Texas coastline or I have to learn to do a better rain dance to keep our energy [police] off our backs."

Life ain't fair or certainly some of the rain we've had here back East would have found its way west. A lot of you put in mucho hours battling Mother Nature's effects and should be recognized for it though I realize most of you aren't. It's a "hope for the best, prepare for the worst" world.

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