

Teachers remember Perot's efforts to change education

AUSTIN (AP) — Those who fought alongside and against Ross Perot as he tried to change public education in Texas are not surprised by the Dallas billionaire's flirtation with a presidential bid.



Perot

Perot's last crusade, however, left the two sides with different impressions.

His leadership of the Select Committee on Public Education suggests how Perot might act on the national stage, as his supporters try to get him on the November ballot as an independent presidential candidate.

Perot spent more than \$1 million in the school reform fight. Imagine what he could do with a \$100 million campaign and targets such as Congress.

"His dogged determination is his greatest strength," said Raymon Bynum, who was sacked as Texas education commissioner in the wake of Perot's reforms. "It's also his greatest weakness."

Many people liked Perot because he got results. Others felt alienated by his autocratic methods.

"He was exciting and dynamic and very surprising," said John Cole, president of the Texas Federation of Teachers, the only teacher group that supported Perot's education battle. "It will be well to remember that hurricanes and tornadoes could also be described by those adjectives."

In 1983-84, Perot blew away the state's education establishment after Democratic Gov. Mark White named him to head a committee on education.

Perot attacked the premium placed on athletics: coaches making more than teachers, students playing sports despite failing courses, class time lost to pep rallies and extra activities.

When the Texas Education Agency hesitated to tell Perot how many principals had previously been coaches, he made up a number. "I started saying in speeches it was 80 percent," Perot said at the time. "That got 'em jumping. 'No way,' they said. 'It's only a little over 50.'"

Perot championed the controversial "no pass, no play" rule that bars students from extracurricular activities for six weeks if they fail a class.

Tornado touches down in Trinity

HOUSTON (AP) — A tornado touched down north of Houston in Trinity Sunday afternoon, causing a three-hour blackout in most of Trinity County and damaging the local high school and several homes, police said.

No injuries were reported from the tornado that was spotted at 5 p.m. said John Raiford, a dispatcher with the Trinity County Sheriff's Office.

However, electricity was knocked out for most of Trinity's 2,648 residents for about three hours, Raiford said.

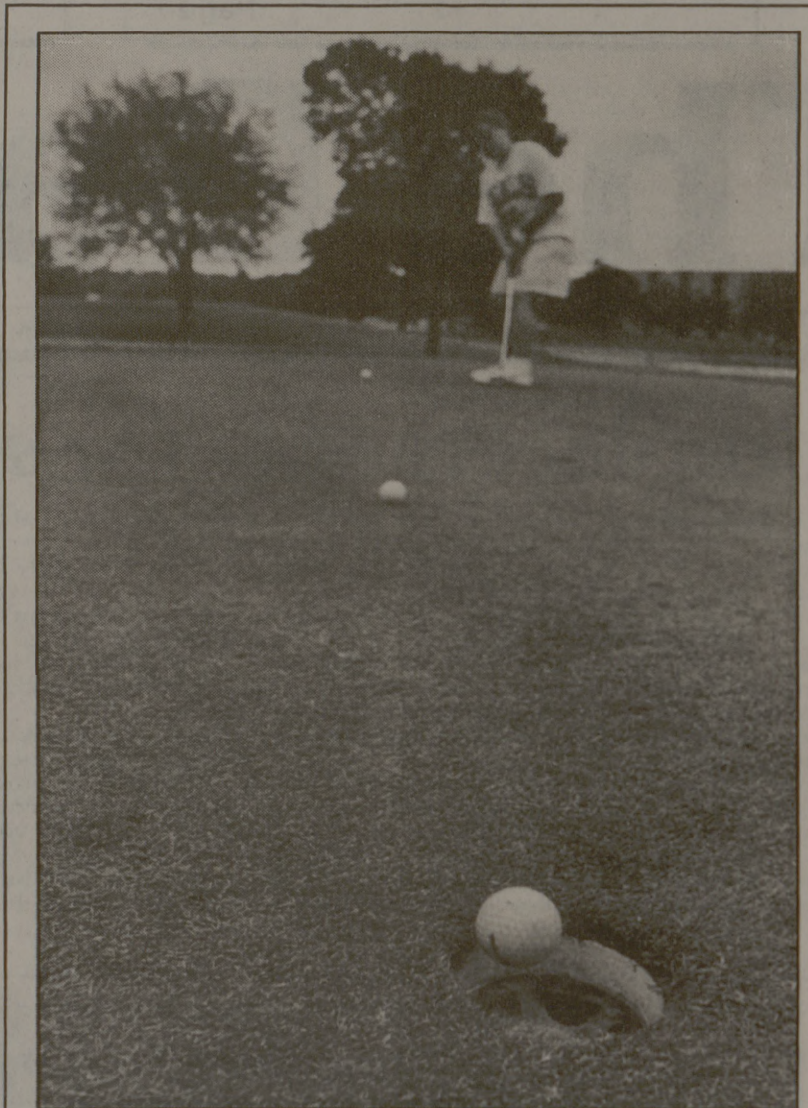
Windows and the roof of the gymnasium at Trinity High School were damaged, forcing officials

to cancel Monday classes, said County Judge Jimmy Thornton.

Several homeowners also reported some damage, Raiford said.

Elsewhere, a thunderstorm near Fulshear, about 30 miles west of Houston, produced 60 mph winds and golf ball-size hail. Orchard in Fort Bend County also reported similar storms, west of Houston. No injuries or serious damage were reported at any of the sites, according to county officials.

The Jasper Sheriff's Office reported hail 11/2 inches in diameter in Ebenezer, 10 miles northwest of Jasper. Jasper is about 130 miles northeast of Houston.



BILLY MORAN/The Battalion

Puttin' on the Ritz

Bobby Hayes, 12, of Bryan practices his putting at the Texas A&M golf course clubhouse Sunday. Hayes has been playing golf for four or five years and is on the Sam Rayburn Junior High School golf team.

City council to vote on rebuilding beach

GALVESTON (AP) — The vanished beach below the island city's sea wall may be rebuilt if a city council vote goes as expected this week.

The council is set to approve building a new 300-foot-wide beach from 10th to 61st Streets along Seawall Boulevard by next spring. Officials foresee the \$5 million, 4-mile project as just a first phase in rebuilding all of Galveston's eroded beaches.

Residents have long talked about restoring the seashore, the last vestiges of which were ripped away by Hurricane Carla in 1961.

Supporters of the renourishment plan believe the council action would be the first step toward bringing the resort town out of the economic doldrums and spurring

Residents look forward to restoration of shore; official evaluates economic benefit for Galveston

renewal along its shabby eastern beach front.

"I cannot think of a project under consideration now that will have a greater economic benefit for Galveston and Galveston County than new beaches in front of the sea wall," said state Rep. Mike Martin, D-Galveston, who has helped bring the project financing to a vote.

"When you put a 300-foot beach in there and people find out about it, they're going to flock to the coast."

Finally getting the concept off the ground took years of work by ardent advocates such as Russ Eitel, co-chairman

of the Galveston County Beach Preservation Association.

It also took last year's passage of the Texas Coastal Zone Management Act and the vigorous support of Col. Brink Miller, the Galveston U.S. Army Corps of Engineers district commander.

And it took an unprecedented consensus of the island's often-fractious interest groups to agree on a way to raise the \$2.5 million local share of the project cost. The federal government would pick up the rest of the tab through the Corps' ship channel dredging budget.

The Coastal Zone Management Act

allows issuance of Texas Water Development Board bonds for erosion control projects such as the Galveston beach renourishment plan, Martin said. The plan calls for issuance of \$2.5 million worth of bonds backed initially by part of the city's hotel-motel tax revenues.

Mayor Barbara Crews said Friday she expects council members to vote to finance the project this week.

The sand for the new beach would come from up to 1.5 million cubic yards of dredge material from the Corps' regular 1993 dredging of Bolivar Roads, the entrance to Galveston Bay from the Gulf of Mexico, and from an anchorage area in Bolivar Roads used by ships awaiting berths at area docks.

Truck driver awaits trial for bus crash

HOUSTON (AP) — A driver charged in the death of a Rio Grande Valley student awaiting trial nearly two years after Texas' worst school accident.

Ruben Perez, 28, is awaiting a stop sign while driving a 22-ton Dr Pepper truck. The truck collided with a Mission Independent District bus on Sept. 21, 1989.

Plea negotiations are being conducted.

But a public tug-of-war between Hidalgo County Attorney Rene Guerra and presiding judge in the case to destroy any plea-bargain. The Houston Chronicle reports in Sunday editions.

A May 4 trial date has been set but more than 100 motions filed by Perez and Joseph Connors, may be put trial back. The judge set earliest his court schedule allow for a lengthy trial in October.

Guerra said he has three plea-bargain offers including a deal that would allow Perez to plead guilty to a misdemeanor and serve as 90 days in jail.

In the accident, an 83-passenger school bus was aboard veered off the road and plunged into a flooded canal, drowning 19 students causing the deaths later.

There have been six hearings since Perez was charged on 21 counts of involuntary manslaughter in November. He is free on bond.

But as the matter drags on, it appears Perez may not see jail time.

The prosecutor, who vowed that Perez would spend time in prison, now says he will probably be dropped through a misdemeanor plea.

CORRECTION

A headline in Friday's Battalion incorrectly stated Donnie Bowman was appointed to a state office, when he actually appointed head of Texas office a federal agency. The Battalion regrets the error.

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