

# Tropical storm damage takes toll on Port Richey rink

By Susan Geary

If roller rinks could talk, SpinNations, in Port Richey, Fla., would have stories to tell. Standing since 1975, it has survived numerous hurricanes and tropical storms.

In the past decade alone, it has been damaged and rebuilt from at least four named storms since Tiffany Balay's family took ownership in 1998. "This is like the fourth time we've been hit with a storm," said Balay while assessing the damage of this spring's Tropical Storm Debby. "In 2004 we had to close for a month because of two back-to-back hurricanes."

Tropical Storm Debby blew through Florida on June 24th of this year, initially with little damage until rising flood waters destroyed the majority of the 30,000 square foot building. SpinNations is situated in a low lying area, but according to Balay, flooding wasn't expected with this storm.

Balay's father is a licensed contractor and had just renovated the rink's front lobby in the past year. He was there the night of the storm trying to divert water away from the building and into the storm drains. When the City's sewer pumps failed, the water started backing up, and at that point he could no longer stop it. At the time of this



*The rock maple floor at SpinNations in Port Richey, Fla., sustained major damage and had to be replaced after Tropical Storm Debby caused floodwaters to rise in late June.*

interview, he and his team were working around the clock to make the repairs necessary to re-open in early August.

Damage is estimated between \$300,000 and \$400,000, which includes the 18,000 square foot rock maple floor. It was completely destroyed by four days of six inches of standing water. Carpeting had to be ripped out and new flooring installed. All shelves had to be replaced, along with the rink office. Only the rental skates and snack bar

freezers were spared by the tropical storm.

FEMA and flood insurance covered the rebuilding costs, which Balay said runs about \$2,400 a year for the policy. As for business interruption insurance, Balay carries it, but stated that it doesn't cover an act of nature.

Indiana-based Floor Systems, Inc. was hired to re-level and re-lay the wood skating floor. They were also hired in 2004 to repair damage from

two storms, but at that time the entire floor was not replaced, just repaired. Hallways into the restrooms have been newly tiled, and the old deejay booth has been repurposed into a pro shop.

Social media helped the rink stay in touch with its skaters during the closing. Photos on the SpinNation's Facebook page show the damage, along with pictures of the workers repairing and replacing the interior. It also directs customers to other nearby rinks, with a note of thanks for their support: Super-Skate of Pinellas, Skateworld Tampa, United Skates of America Tampa, and Skate Reflections of Kissimmee. The nearby rinks took in the artistic and derby teams as a place to practice during the rebuild of SpinNations.

While the clean up continued, Balay was busy planning and coordinating SpinNations grand re-opening party to welcome back skaters in early August. The party included free admission, rentals, hot dogs, and soda. It was funded by the sale of banner space sales advertising local businesses for \$50 per year.

Balay sees Tropical Storm Debby as a blessing in disguise. "You can't prepare for this. As soon as it's done, you start working to clean it up. You accept it and move on," she said.

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