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El Niño winter could be fiercest ever in FL

Storms more frightening than hurricanes may hit

Kimberly Miller
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

In the El Niño winter of 1998, tornadoes stole into Florida in the overnight hours of Feb. 22 with ruinous, murderous intent.

Newspaper articles talk of a baby sucked from his father's arms into the darkness, a heroic fiancé who forced his girlfriend into the only safe space in their one-bedroom trailer before it disintegrated around them, and comparisons to Category 5 Hurricane Andrew

but with less warning. Forty-two people died, 250 were injured. The baby was found in a nearby body of water, the heroic fiancé in some grass near the twisted metal of the couple's mobile home.

The coming months bring another El Niño winter, only different; stronger — the strongest possibly on record, and concerns are increasing about supercell thunderstorms vibrating with tornadic energy, flooding, late season freezes and a prolonged stretch of damp and cooler weather that could erode soil, increase plant disease and grown fungus on crops.

"People will notice the frequency of the rain," said meteorologist Matt Volk-

mer, who was stationed in the National Weather Service's Tallahassee office during the 1997-1998 El Niño. "We were working a strong thunderstorm every few days because they just kept coming."

In the days following the 1998 tornadoes that included three rare 200-mph EF3s in Central Florida, El Niño seemed almost a novelty. Articles spelled it out phonetically (pronounced NEEN'yo), tildes over the "n" were largely absent, and descriptions were literal "El Nino means baby Jesus."

Today, El Niño is water cooler conversation.

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The front page of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune a day after tornadoes rampaged through Central Florida during the El Niño winter of 1998. SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE

Camp David-like golf retreat mulled



This aerial shot, taken in February 2018, shows Trump International Golf Club near West Palm Beach. President Donald Trump said this month that he wants the site to become a presidential retreat similar to Camp David in the mountains of Maryland. BRUCE R. BENNETT/PALM BEACH POST

County officials receptive, seek details on Trump plan

Antonio Fins and Mike Diamond
Palm Beach Post | USA TODAY NETWORK

Palm Beach County has directed its staff to explore an offer from President Donald Trump to build a Camp David-like retreat at Trump International Golf Club.

The details of the offer, first disclosed by The Palm Beach Post, remain sparse, but the concept has generally received a favorable reaction from county officials. County Administrator Joe Abruzzo told The Post this month the proposal is a "remarkable and historic opportunity."

Commissioner Maria Sachs has also expressed initial interest in Trump's offer.

"It should have a very positive impact on the region's economy," Sachs said. "It will bring global leaders to our county, which will be very positive."

The proposal was first outlined in a Sept. 3 letter

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Trump, seen here at Trump International Golf Club in December 2017, has made playing the course a regular part of his many visits to Mar-a-Lago, his Palm Beach estate.

RICHARD GRAULICH/PALM BEACH POST

Jolly says he won't debate Donalds

Governor's race rivals spar over setting terms

John Pacenti
Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

Florida Democratic gubernatorial candidate David Jolly said Sept. 20 he won't debate Republican Byron Donalds, accusing the Republican of trying to dictate the terms of the forums and acting in bad faith.

"It is clear, given the tenor of the current campaign environment, including Byron's repeated lies and bad faith, that debates this cycle would not create constructive, honest conversation and would only further stoke division, animosity and bad will. That's not something I wish to do for our state," Jolly said in a statement.

Both candidates accepted different debates at different times. Jolly said he would appear in front of the Tiger Bay Club with Donalds in a moderated forum and at a roundtable with journalist Jim Defede at CBS Miami.

A board member with the Tampa Tiger Bay Club told the publication the Phoenix on Sept. 8 that the Donalds campaign had initially agreed to appear jointly with Jolly.

The Republican then told the bipartisan forum that he wanted to appear separately, then not at all, and then that he would send his running mate, Miami-Dade County state Sen. Bryan Avila.

The Jolly campaign started trolling Donalds on social media, noting that the congressman had said in July he would debate the Democrat three times.

That's when, on Sept. 18, the Donalds campaign said it had agreed to three debates without consulting the Jolly campaign at all.

Donalds said he would debate Jolly at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee on Sept. 29, in North Florida on Oct. 13 on News4Jax and in Miami on Oct. 22 on Telemundo and NBC 6. None of the debates would be in front

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