Tornado Hits Tampa Bay Golf and Country Club

Photograph of F2 damage to home in the
Tampa Bay Golf and Country Club

101 Homes Damaged by the Tornado

A small F2 tornado, about 100 yards wide with winds up to 125 mph, rapidly developed within a line of thunderstorms (Figure 1) at around 11:20 AM EST December 25, 2006. This line of thunderstorms was out ahead of a cold front (Figure 3) that was moving across the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

The tornado which affected the Tampa Bay Golf and Country Club, located a few miles west of San Antonio, Florida, caused over $1 million in damage, but only two injuries. One hundred and one homes in the

community had damage, twenty-one of which were considered heavily damaged, and six destroyed.

The tornado first touched down a short distance southwest of the Clubhouse, then moved north for about one mile ending just south of State Road 52 (Figure 2). It produced damage all along its path, most of which was rated as F0/F1 on the Fujita Scale. However, damage rated as F2 occurred on the 29000 block of Caddyshack Lane. A visiting family was in one of these houses when the tornado ripped through. Miraculously no one was seriously hurt with only a few cuts on their faces and feet.

Numerous other homes had damage ranging from just some shingles ripped off to screened-in porches totally destroyed and tossed more than 100 feet.

The weather conditions Christmas morning were ripe for severe wind gusts and tornadoes across the Florida peninsula. A vigorous upper level disturbance diving into Deep South Texas aided the fairly quick development and intensification of a surface low, which tracked from the western Gulf of Mexico to the Louisiana/Mississippi border between Christmas Eve and early Christmas morning. As the low intensified, a southerly flow of moisture from the western Caribbean was lifted by the trailing cold front into a rapidly developing line of thunderstorms, which initially extended from the Yucatan Peninsula through the Loop Current to the near Apalachicola.

The line maintained its intensity as it moved into the eastern Gulf during the pre-dawn hours, fed by increasing directional shear, shown by turning winds from southeast near the surface to southwest above the surface, and speed shear, shown by >40 knot winds just above the surface. These winds, combined with an increasingly unstable atmosphere (Figure 4), induced numerous rotating thunderstorms within the line.

Between 4:00 and 7:00 AM, several of these rotating storms crossed the Gulf waters between 40 and 60 miles west of Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus Counties. In fact, the NOAA buoy 100 nautical miles west of Hernando Beach (Station 42036) recorded an instantaneous gust of nearly 80 mph as one of these storms raced by shortly before 4:00 AM! Though these particular cells weakened as the line moved closer to shore, others would develop by late morning as the line moved onto the Suncoast. One of these, which intensified rapidly in northwestern Hillsborough County at around 11:00 AM, would race northeast into Pasco County and soon drop the F2 tornado.

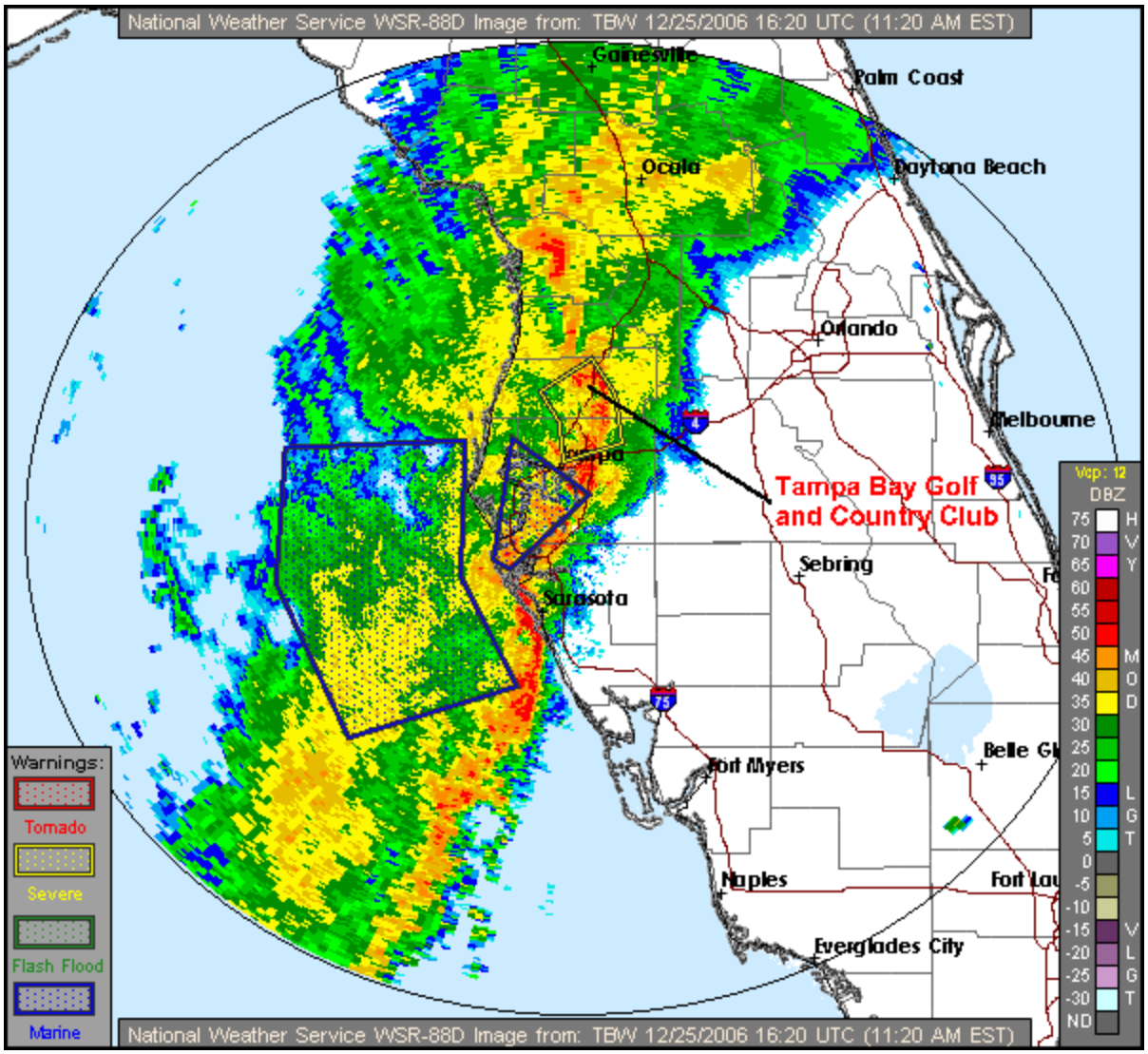
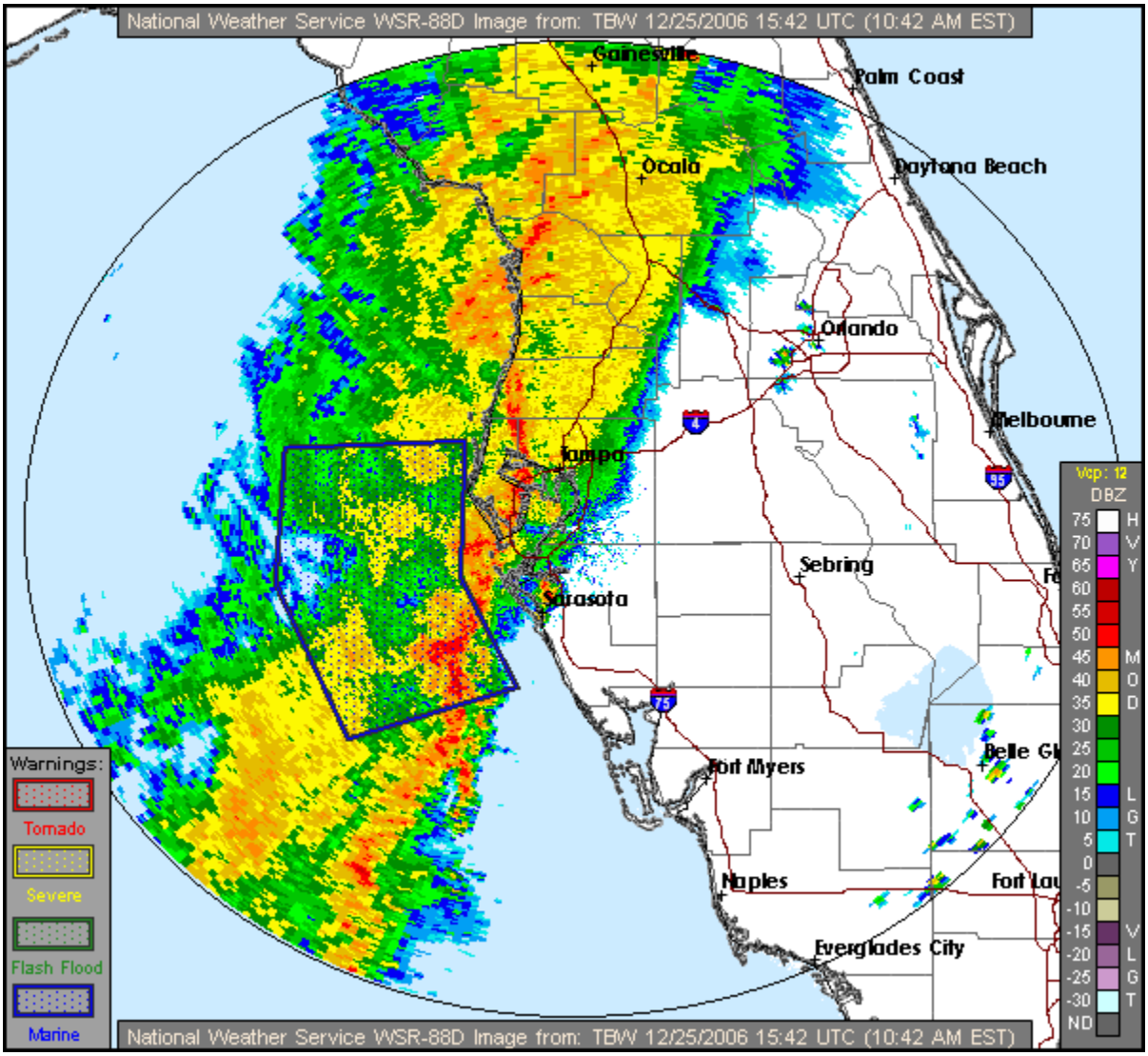


Figure 1. Base reflectivity image, 11:20 AM EST, December 25, 2006.



Base reflectivity loop

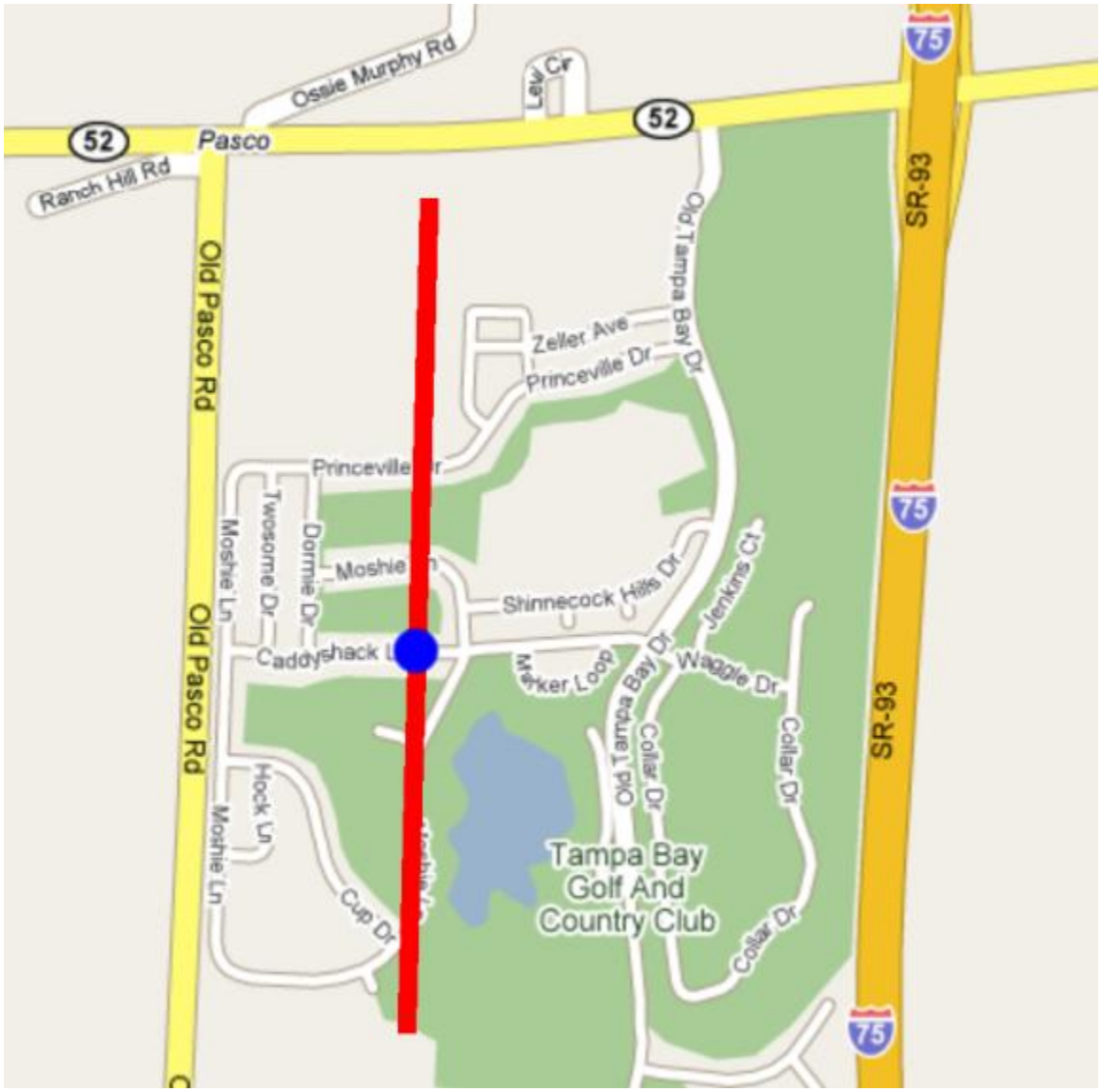


Figure 2. *Track of tornado (red line) overlaid on zoomed in map of central Pasco County. Blue circle indicates location with F2 damage.*

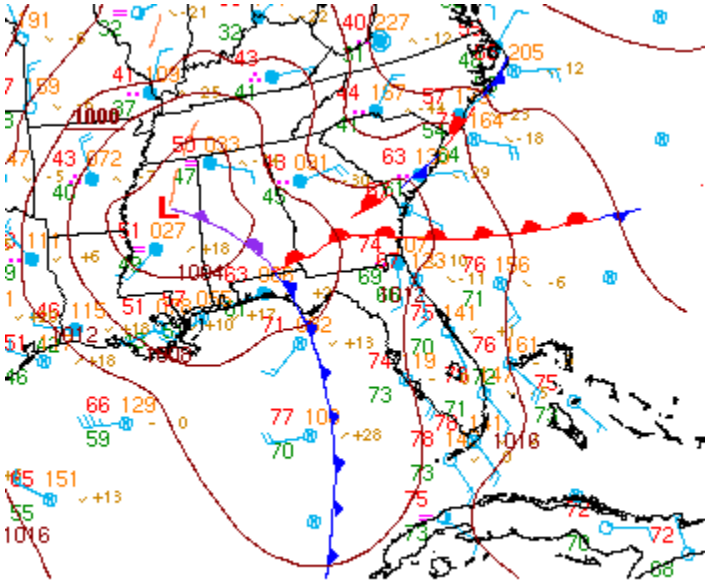


Figure 3. *Surface Analysis, 7:00 AM EST December 25, 2006*

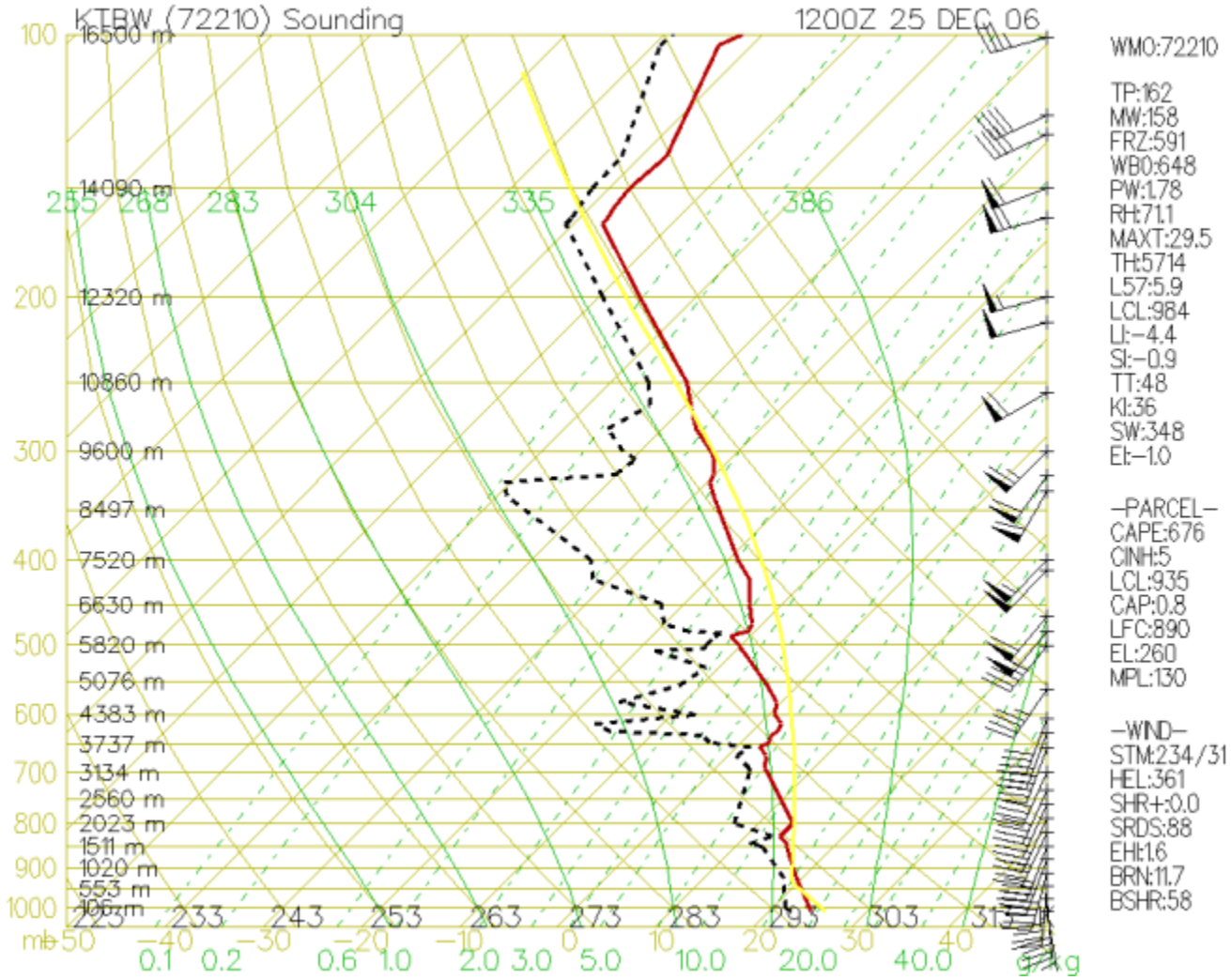


Figure 4. *Upper Air Sounding, 7:00 AM EST December 25, 2006.*