AFTERWORDS

3-2-1 BLASTOFF

After a two-year hiatus, the U.S. successfully launched the Space Shuttle Discovery from Cape Canaveral. I don’t remember the circumstances surrounding the day, but I remember being home and watching the launch on my 50-inch, high-definition TV. What a wonderful and glorious sight it was with all the rumbling, roaring, fire, and smoke associated with the initial blastoff.

Fast forward a couple of weeks to August 11. The launching of little white balls began at Baltusrol. I was absolutely horrified to watch not just Tiger, John, and Phil hitting it over 300 yards every time they teed off, but the entire field was bombing it out of sight. Then came the Ladies Amateur won by Morgan Pressel, a high-school senior who was hitting it 260 yards. The coup de gras was the World Championship at Firestone where, on one particular hole, the entire field of 64 hit it 300 yards plus except for two weaklings who only got it out in the 290s. On one hole, Tiger hit it 340 and was still behind Mike Weir. That’s correct, the little Canadian who must be all of 5-7 and 140 pounds soaking wet smoked it 365 yards. Enough of the groundwork, my point is the ball is going too far, and anyone who doesn’t think so is looking at the world — or in this case, golf course — through rose-colored glasses.

Now I don’t want to sound like a bitter old frump who can’t hit it out of his own shadow anymore, but where is this all going to end? The rule-makers are back on track and need our support to keep the game we all love safe from the corporate techies. If you do not belong to the USGA, join! Visit their Web site at www.usga.org and see what they are doing to protect our game. In particular, look at the list of non-conforming clubs and balls. So much technology, so little time.

There was just so much stuff coming down the pike at once that they blinked a couple of times, got threatened with a few lawsuits and here we are with a 15-year-old girl hitting it 300 yards!

The rule-makers are very aware of what’s going on in the game of long ball; hitting for the fences, taking it deep.

So, here’s what happens: You take a ball with 432 dimples which is 1.682 inches in diameter, weighs 1.59 ounces, put it on a tee 2-1/2 inches long, and hit it with a driver with a head that fills 460 cc, has a coefficient of restitution of .83, on the end of a high-tech shaft. The ball is in contact with the clubhead for 450 microseconds, hit with 2,000 pounds of force, compresses one-fourth of its diameter, and — if properly hit — has backspin making it fly as wings make an airplane fly.

My personal take on the situation is that the governing bodies got caught with their pants down because everything hit at the same time. They were testing clubs and balls, but not launch angles or aerodynamics. They didn’t see the guys in the gym getting stronger. They didn’t see them throw away their cigarettes and drinking Perrier or diet soda instead of scotch and beer. There was just so much stuff coming down the pike at once that they blinked a couple of times, got threatened with a few lawsuits and here we are with a 15-year-old girl hitting it 300 yards!

Yes, she’s a great player… but 300 yards?

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See you on the range... or maybe in orbit.

AS IT LIES

Jim Walker
You’ve Got to be Kidding!

I think we are all shaking our heads at reporters trying to make a coherent report of hurricane conditions while being buffeted by winds and rain and then tell people not to go outside. Duh! One of these days a piece of wind-blown debris… oh well, the ratings will soar.

 conditions while being buffeted by winds and rain and then tell people not to go outside. Duh! One of these days a piece of wind-blown debris… oh well, the ratings will soar. Do these reporters have to sign a waiver or can their families sue the network or station for placing them in jeopardy?

Here are a few more things that make no sense these days. We have ripped and frayed blue jeans fresh off the rack and faded fabrics that make a shirt look like it’s ready for Good Will. There are bullet-hole decals finding their way onto cars and trucks as if road rage violence wasn’t already an issue. There are virtual pets you take care of with a hand-held device and radio controlled robot doggies, although those are yesterday’s toys for people who have forgotten real life.

And this just in from David Robinson, associate director of grounds operations for Marriott Golf: “In the Thursday Sept. 1, 2005 edition of The Wall Street Journal, Personal Journal section there was a special advertising section for the Deutsche Bank Championship. Within this section was a part titled “Getting The Course Ready.” In my rudimentary thinking process, I actually thought this would be an interview with the golf course superintendent. Wrong. It was with the general manager. He did manage to mention the superintendent. He also mentioned the “ergonomic” experts from the PGA Tour who would help troubleshoot the course. That’s right, “ergonomic.” At least the operators will be comfortable with little fatigue. I thought you might find this funny as well as disturbing.”

“Thanks for sharing, Dave. I’ll bet there are a lot of us looking for an ergonomic flymow. Oh well, we’ve endured pet rocks, cans of souvenir air from wherever and pregnant pig gestation crates in our own state constitution. Now back to spray on mud. I mean, are we nuts or what? The next thing you know, they will be inventing green paint for turfgrass.

Oops, I’d better go now.”