PARTING SHOTS

PRO-ENVIRONMENT?

As always, the latest issue of PGA Magazine landed in my old-fashioned, wooden inbox with a resounding “whump!” Despite the ups and downs of the golf business, PGA Magazine has never lacked thickness. Its staff sells ad pages to every stinkin’ company in the galaxy that wants to make a buck off of boneheads like me who walk into a golf shop desperately looking for some magic product that will fix their slice and/or hook and/or distance problem and/or Charles Barkley-esque golf swing. Good for them.

The bottom line is that it’s a fine publication that does an admirable job of helping the PGA of America members do their jobs more effectively. But the cover of the typically fat September issue grabbed my attention with this headline: Golf and the Environment – How PGA Golf Professionals Are Working To Make Golf ‘Greener’. My keen, journalistically trained mind instantly processed the headline and generated this brilliantly stunning question: Huh? I was intrigued but a little befuddled by the idea of golf professionals being actively involved with environmental issues. At first blush, it seemed comparable to one of the turf magazines running a cover story about how superintendents are helping low-handicapers cure the yips.

So I enthusiastically dove into my copy of the magazine. In addition to the cover story – which is a lengthy, well-written and pretty straightforward account of the issues and what a few ecofriendly facilities are doing to address them – the magazine includes a president’s message column from the PGA’s Brian Whitcomb. It contained the following interesting statements:

“Many PGA members have already become involved in touting the positive environmental programs their facilities have in place. To these forward-thinking members, thanks for setting the example by taking on leadership roles in an area where we may have taken a back seat in the past.

“With the environment more and more becoming a front-burner issue worldwide in the 21st century, we can no longer afford to leave the driving to someone else when it comes to golf.”

Hmmmm. Nice turn of phrase. Carefully chosen words. Excellent automotive imagery. But vague enough to compel me to ask: What the hell does it actually mean? Let’s consider two possibilities.

First, one could read this quote (which is, admittedly, chopped from a larger column, so find a copy and read the entire thing for context) and conclude the PGA of America is completely supportive of superintendents taking the lead role on environmental issues but doesn’t want outsiders and activists to dictate what happens to our business.

Alternatively, one could read this quote and conclude the PGA of America has decided, politically, they shouldn’t cede authority for a real issue facing the golf industry...