Why the USGA Must Prevail

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD

The power companies felt the same way about the rules governing energy distribution in California that Callaway does about golf’s rules. They were a pain and stood in the way of joy, happiness and lower rates for customers. So the state deregulated, and, as we all know, things haven’t turned out well for the Golden State.

The same rules question applies to the Florida recount. One could argue that both sides fidgeted, stretched and in some cases tried to circumvent the rules when they didn’t like the outcome. But we had a judicial system that ultimately stepped in and order was restored.

The USGA functions as golf’s judicial system. It’s the only governing body in the sport that can put its personal preferences aside and do what is right for the game’s present and future.

Ely Callaway has decided he doesn’t like the rules of golf, so he has set out to use his marketing and financial machine to move them out of his way. Problem is, he entered the golf business knowing these rules were in place. In the late 1980s, he even supported the USGA during the Ping square-groove controversy. The language stating that a club cannot serve as a “trampoline” or “spring” have been in the rule book for years. Now that such wording interferes with Callaway’s sales and growth projections for 2001, his support for the rule has eroded.

Ely Callaway is dangerous to golf. Regardless of how you feel about our friends in Far Hills, N.J., the USGA needs the golf industry’s support. Without that support, the integrity of the game we work so hard to preserve will be completely destroyed.