



A PUBLIC disgrace

In a special US Open report, Sandy McDivot reveals a cunning plan to make the Championship more exciting

I write this while watching Mr Wood's engaged in his usual demolition of both course and fellow competitor at the US Open and I am being regaled with a steady stream of dialogue about how the venue is a public course – the Bethpage State Park Black Course.

Yes, hard to believe, but the US Open is being played on a "muni". Now as you know I am not one for cynical expression, but if that's a municipal then Tiger Woods is my illegitimate son. For starters they say it is subjected to 35,000 rounds of

fee, will be subjected to a huge hike. Then there is the huge problem that faces the game in that young Tiger is turning golf into a dull and predictable exhibition. So how can both problems be overcome?

Well, seeing as you ask, I would now like to reveal to you all, how I would promote golf as a game for the masses, while at the same time insure against future domination by the young genius.

Firstly I would select a true municipal course, one that is subjected to the annual onslaught of at least 70,000 rounds of golf, and only by qualified hackers, all of whom would be carefully vetted for complete golfing incompetence and ignorance of all matters pertaining to golfing etiquette.

Now I would like to examine the question of Tiger's prodigious length off the tee. How can we negate that as an advantage? Well, in the past they appear to have come up with the brilliant stratagem of extending the length of the courses in the hope that it will result in even Tiger being unable to reach holes in a couple of smacks. Well far be it from me to point out the bleeding obvious, but is that not being plain stupid?

What we must do is select a course that is no more than 6,000 yards from the back tees. And, as the back tees on a municipal are for ornamental purposes only, it would mean a course of no more than 5,500 yards, which should take away all his length advantage.

Secondly, how can we combat his physical advantage? Well I have thought long and hard about this one and I think I have come up with the answer.

Remember that this tournament, will be played strictly to true municipal tradition, so Tiger must turn up at the club on the Saturday and Sunday morning at about 4am, ready

to put his ball in the chute in anticipation of the twilight kick off.

So what about Tiger's famous preparations? Well, we must insist that only genuine council range balls are used. These have a random built in bias that will turn a hook into a slice and a slice into a hook, thereby insuring total confusion.

The Head Greenkeeper will have a critical role to play. It is essential that Tiger's ability to impart backspin is removed so all the fairways should remain uncut for at least a month before the big event.

The Head Man must also take full responsibility for creating as much of a luck factor as is realistically feasible. He can do this by insuring that the fairways are composed of at least 50% unreplaced divots, that the bunkers are officially classified as a disgrace and that the greens are riddled with pitchmarks. They must never exceed 3 on the stimpmeter and the holes will be changed two months prior to the big event and not again until the day after it finishes.

Now let us study how we may remove Tiger's exceptional powers of concentration. I think we should partner Tiger with Old Sid, who has played off a 24 handicap for the last 30 years, but has not actually played to it since 1975. He has never ever lost a golf ball, not because he is exceptionally accurate, far from it, it is just that he carries on looking for all lost balls until they are found, regardless of the time factor and he will expect Tiger to help him.

Bring all that into force and I reckon Tiger would be reduced to second favourite behind John Daly, who would be quite at home at such a place. And if after all that, he still manages to win, they should not only give him the trophy to keep.

You can just imagine the success rate of a Head Greenkeeper going to the local council and asking for three million so as he can tart things up a bit for a big tournament. Seeing as a request for a new rake normally brings a requisite filling in of a 20 page form in triplicate, I think his chances are somewhat limited

golf annually, which on a true public golf course would be officially defined as empty. Then we are told that they have spent three million on getting the thing up to standard. You can just imagine the success rate of a Head Greenkeeper going to the local council and asking for three million so as he can tart things up a bit for a big tournament. Well seeing as a request for a new rake normally brings with it the requisite filling in of a 20 page form in triplicate, then I think his chances are somewhat limited.

But the more I think of it the more I believe the USGA has missed a golden opportunity. Presumably their rationale for visiting a public course, was to make the statement that the game of golf is open to all. But this was not your normal "muni" as at the end of this year's US Open, the green

Sandy McDivot, Head Greenkeeper, Sludgecombe Pay & Play