

Boy turns care for environment into innovation

By Patrick Quinn

A well-learned lesson in golf course etiquette and an idle question during a summer round with his father has turned into a world of commercial opportunity for 12-year-old Casey Golden.

Casey's father, John Golden, always has required that his son pick up and dispose of his broken tee after a drive. The Evergreen, Colo., seventh-grader, who aspires to be a PGA Tour player, asked his dad what happens to broken tees left on the course.

The elder Golden, who helped pay his way through college working for a golf course superintendent, explained that the unsightly wood fragments are cleaned up by the course

maintenance staff to prevent them from dulling mower blades.

Casey did some research and learned that there are additional costs associated with wooden golf tees.

"Wooden tees," he explains, "use up the equivalent of 40,000 birch tees, each 40 feet tall and 18 inches in diameter."

That struck Casey as wasteful. Working in his mother's kitchen, he created a mixture of water, flour, peat moss, fertilizer, grass seed and ... applesauce.

"The applesauce makes it stiff," he said. "I molded it into a little cylinder and cooked it in the microwave oven. Once it was hard, I sanded it down into a tee." The result was a

biodegradable golf tee — the perfect accessory for the Green Decade.

"Kids today are much more environmentally aware than we were when we were growing up," said Casey's father. "And he's always been creative."

Casey improved the appearance of the finished product by molding the next prototype through the tip of a caulking gun.

He entered that tee in Invent America, a contest for creative grade-school students sponsored by the Commerce Department.

Casey's tee won the state, regional and national competitions, earning him a savings bond, a trip to Washington, D. C., and written congratulations from no less a duffer than President George Bush.

As part of his prize, Casey's elementary school received a grant of computer equipment from the government.



Casey Golden: player, now inventor

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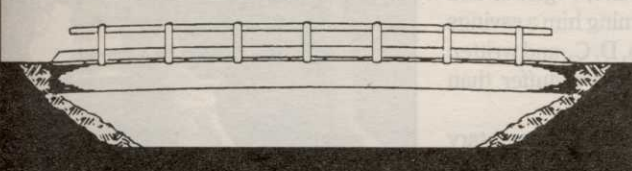
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Invention

Continued from page 78

Casey and his family saw commercial opportunities in the tee and began showing the tee to golf course superintendents, asking for suggestions about how to improve the product.

One immediate result was deleting the grass seed and fertilizer from the mixture.

"Superintendents didn't like that idea," Casey said. "There are a lot of different types of grass on different courses, and we didn't want bentgrass growing on a bluegrass course because of the tee.

After consulting with Hauser Laboratories in Boulder, Colo., all ingredients were changed.

"The new version doesn't have any of the original ingredients," said father John. "Superintendents were unhappy with the idea of fertilizer on the course that they didn't apply, or the thought of bent shooting up through Bermuda, so we came up with a new formulation."

The lab also helped ensure that the end product met all the strength and rigidity requirements necessary to make the tee usable during a round of golf.

The commercial finished product, BIO-T, is produced by Bio Dynamics Ltd., the company formed by the Golden to manufacture Casey's invention.

The BIO-T is virtually indistinguishable from a conventional golf tee, except for its enhanced biodegradability. Broken and immersed in water, a BIO-T will dissolve in about 24 hours.

The tees are treated with an ultraviolet-sensitive chemical that ensures that even intact tees will break down if left exposed to the elements.

"The result is priced competitively with personalized tees," said John Golden. "And it offers obvious environmental appeal. If a golf tee can be sexy, we're sexy."

Casey's talent as an inventor has earned him considerable media attention and a trip to Japan, but he has no plans to turn his hand to any new projects right away.

"I kind of want to see this invention all the way through before I start another one," he said.

He hasn't let the possibility of entrepreneurial success distract him from his two primary concerns, which remain school and improving his golf game.

The youthful inventor leaves the details of running Bio-Dynamics to his father.

"I'd better not make him mad," said John Golden. "He'll fire me."

Patrick Quinn is a freelance writer based in Lawrence, Kansas.

Mechem takes reins from Blue at LPGA

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Charles S. Mechem Jr. has replaced the fired Bill Blue as commissioner of the Ladies Professional Golf Association.

Mechem, 60, retired last June after 24 years with the Great American Broadcasting Co., formerly called Taft Broadcasting Co. He served as chairman and chief executive officer from the time he joined the company in December 1976 until he retired. He then assumed the chairmanship of Great American Broadcasting Co.'s executive committee.

A native of Nelsonville, Ohio, Mechem graduated in 1952 from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, then attended Yale Law School, graduating in 1955. He joined the law firm of Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, where he became a partner and remained until joining Taft Broadcasting Co.