

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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