

**'Old Tom' winner**

**Nelson: Course care improvements have surpassed equipment**

By MARK LESLIE

DALLAS—Saying the greatest improvement in golf today is not in equipment but in the condition of the courses, golfing legend Byron Nelson accepted the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) most prestigious honor, the Old Tom Morris Award.

Nelson was revered at the GCSAA's annual banquet as "setting a legacy that will never be equaled."

Presenting the award, outgoing GCSAA President Randy Nichols recounted Nelson's unparalleled playing career that included 11 consecutive victories at one point.

A caddy who "graduated" to mowing greens as a teen-ager, Nelson said, "I've had a great respect for superintendents all my life."

In his younger days, he said, "We didn't have any verticut machines. We didn't have any aerators. We just had plain old common Bermudagrass.

"You [superintendents] have made so many great strides in the way you've developed turf management, it's unbelievable."

Nelson focused on greens, saying, "You've even changed the way we putt." He recounted that his first putter had loft on it because "the grain was so bad you had to get the ball up" to get a roll.

Of the Old Tom Morris Award, given for outstanding contributions to the game of golf, Nelson said, "I'm honored beyond description to receive it."

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— Byron Nelson

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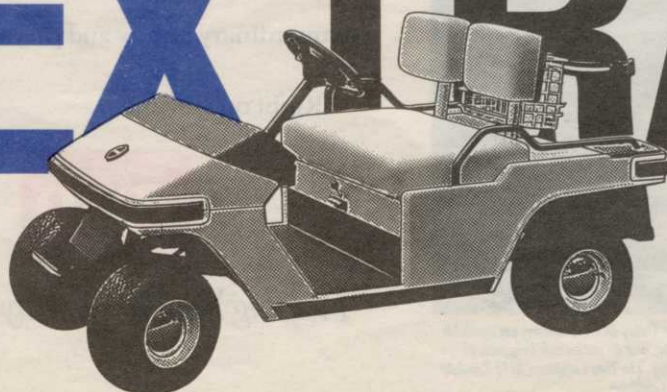
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