

Crenshaw on the 'unjuiced' golf ball

Some people have supported the idea of giving PGA Tour players a ball that has 10 percent less distance.

Does Ben Crenshaw think these balls would help in design? "I think it may," Crenshaw said. "And it may help in assessing what happens from week to week at a PGA Tour event. Jack [Nicklaus] was the first to come out with that idea. It was probably a little revolutionary for its time, but I think it makes good sense over the long haul. I can't believe how far people hit the ball these days. You figure something must be done at some point. You don't know how that will sit, but I think it's a very intriguing proposition."

Q&A with Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore

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We've always tried to apply time-proven design principles. The interpretation of those principles hopefully is a little different in each case. But have we changed dramatically in terms of style or philosophy? I don't think so.

GCN: Ben, you're a golf historian and traditionalist. Has the

pendulum swung back to the point where most architects are in your camp — that of the classics?

Crenshaw: A lot of projects these days seem to have a heavier commitment to golf. People are asking, Why is a course being built in a specific area? What are the needs? Is it for golf, or real estate? Every-

body has to ask those questions.

Maybe there is a trend back to the classics, which is great. I don't think Bill or I would take any credit. It's flattering. But there are a lot of architects who are very eager to get out their best work. That's very, very healthy for the people who build golf courses.

GCN: What about the philosophy of a more minimalist approach to design?

Crenshaw: Trends have always been felt, no matter what architectural endeavor you speak of: buildings, offices or residential. It is the same in golf course architecture. It's wonderful if people have rediscovered courses they had grown up on, or go to new places that have that commitment to minimalism.

All of us in the building business continually are challenged with the advances in golf equipment and agronomy. The overall aim is to make it playable.

GCN: Part of it has to do with the available land. There are precious few sites with sand like Pinehurst or Long Island. Yet today you have two projects on Long Island. Are those two giving you the opportunity to build the old-fashioned kind of courses that you like?

Crenshaw: Sand is certainly a blessing no matter where you find it. There is a myriad of things that sand helps so much. It's certainly aesthetics, it's raw material, it's slashes of sand, that lead one to believe it is more natural. It's a lot more economical in every sense. East Hampton was wonderful because of that main ingredient as well as the native grasses.

GCN: What is your favorite type of hole to design?

Crenshaw: I like short par-4s. They're very difficult to bring off. But, properly brought up, they're fun. If you have a hole where it's a thrilling choice to make, but it's exacting as well, it brings a real shot value into the scheme of things. Length is always a fascination because nearly everyone can get there in two strokes.

A long par-4 is something as well. But you never know how long to make them these days. You never know where to end — at 475 [yards] or whatever. A 310- to 340-yard hole, with smallish greens and exacting nature, can be a lot of fun.

GCN: With Tiger playing, it could be a 3-wood for that hole.

Crenshaw (laughing): It might be a strong 3-wood for Tiger.

GCN: Haven't we lost the strategic value of the older courses because of the distances the pros hit the ball?

Crenshaw: If these courses are played in optimum conditions —

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