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JUICED ... SUPERINTENDENT STYLE

I've always admired Furman Bisher, the legendary golf scribe for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He's covered more Masters tournaments than Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods have played in – combined. He's always had a great feel for the nuances and history of the game and a wonderful way with words.

With that said, he – and many other golf scribblers – blew it recently when reporting on the PGA Tour's new policy about drug testing. Like a pile of other writers and pundits, Bisher blithely dismissed the idea that any of the fine folks who get paid to play golf would ever use a performance enhancing substance. He wrote:

"The idea that golf should find itself lumped into the sweaty world of muscle sports goes against the grain. Players being lined up to pee in a cup to be tested like grunt athletes comes across as offensive. Golf is known as 'the gentleman's game,' in which cheating is the most deadly of sins, and the use of enhancing drugs would be cheating. Golfers police themselves, call penalties on themselves. Imagine, if you will, Bobby Jones, Arnold Palmer or Jack Nicklaus being called upon to prove themselves 'clean.'"

Umm, sure. That's like saying that because Joe DiMaggio or Jim Brown didn't take steroids, there's no reason to believe that today's baseball or football players ever would.

Been to a Nationwide Tour or college event recently? Have you seen these "gentlemen"? Some of them have muscles that would make Schwarzenegger blush. Think about it. Championship courses routinely are longer than 7,000 yards, and these kids are constantly trying new drivers, balls and swing gurus just to gain a few yards. Distance equals dollars ... or maybe a Tour card and really big bucks and fame. If some mysterious substance could magically add 15 or 20 yards off the tee, don't you think they would consider it?

Also, remember many of these young

studs have grown up in a youth sports culture that embraces strength, speed and winning at any cost. Their contemporaries in high school and college sports were using performance enhancing drugs to bulk up, run faster, jump higher and recover from injuries quicker. I'm the parent of a pretty successful high school athlete and know steroids and other illegal supplements are readily available within his network of teammates and friends. Can you imagine that a few of today's aspiring golf superstars wouldn't try PEDs to get stronger and longer? I can't.

This issue is real and our old friend Steve Mona will have to deal with it in his new role as head of the World Golf Foundation. Running the PED testing program is one part of his job description. Dealing with golf's doping issues won't be much fun for Steve, but I guess he'll be in the limelight sooner, rather than later, as pro golfers at different levels start returning positive tests. I wish him luck and fervently hope he doesn't have to watch Phil Mickelson pee in a cup. That's a frightful image.

As I tried to think through the PED issue, something weird occurred to me. (Imagine that.) I think I've found a silver lining around this otherwise dark cloud looming over golf. Perhaps we could create a line of PEDs just for golf course superintendents. You're not covered under the new rules and, theoretically, you're free to do whatever you need to do to succeed. So, I'm thinking about launching a new line of superintendent-friendly PEDs. The possibilities are endless, but here are a few products we might offer along with their potential side effects:

Nosleepatol – A special anabolic compound that allows superintendents to avoid the temptation to go to bed. Why succumb to sleep when you could be worrying about the golf course 24/7? (Side effects: Divorce.)

Fungiroid – With this new growth hormone, all you need to do is walk or ride around the course, and your body will emit

a chemical that automatically kills all the disease pathogens within 100 yards. (Side effects: You'll need to get EPA registration for your sweat glands.)

Irri-gra – Struggling to deal with water restrictions or short-falls in your sprinkler patterns? There's no problem if you and your crew take Irri-gra. The drug stimulates your bladder constantly, and you can literally whiz around the course and keep it wall-to-wall green using only nature's best watering technique. (Side effects: Course neighbors file a misdemeanor charge for indecent public exposure.)

Moodamone – Having a hard time keeping your temper when golfers make stupid demands? The next time a 28-handicapper asks, "Why can't we cover the bunkers with tarps so the sand is nice and dry when I play in the morning?" you can simply smile and go on your way thanks to Moodamone. It builds your natural ability to ignore idiots and makes interactions with players much more palatable. (Side effects: Unemployment.)

Happytan – This water-soluble compound is a special tank-mix that allows you to keep all golfers happy all the time. It's a sprayable combination of Prozac and chloralathalonil. Just put it out as part of your spray rotation, and there'll be no disease and no complaints as golfers play happily (or at least groggily) throughout the course – an unbeatable combination. (Side effects: None. Enjoy!)

Hispanitoin – Instantly allows you to communicate with and comprehend the needs of your Spanish-speaking employees. Productivity will increase 500 percent as you're able to actually understand what motivates your work force. (Side effects: Constant craving for jalapeños.)

So, until Mr. Mona and his new employers get around to making superintendents pee in a cup, you can contact Flagstick LLC, and we'll be glad to serve all of your performance-enhancing needs. Someday, we might be the BALCO of the golf course maintenance industry. After all, if the Tour guys are doing it, why shouldn't you enjoy better living through chemistry, too? **GCI**