



THE "GRAINY" AWARDS

Music has the Grammys. TV the Emmys. I'm proud to announce "The Grainys," my awards – both good and bad – for the golf industry. Looking back at 2012, it's been an up and down year, which is why there are so many contestants in both the "yay" and "nay" categories. There will be one big winner, announced at the end. I hope you can stay up.

YAYS. WE GIVE A BIG THUMBS-UP TO:

- **Peter McDonough.** The superintendent at Keswick GC in Virginia, Pete is a true innovator in the use of water. Working on behalf of Virginia's golf course superintendents and allied associations, he created state of the art water-management guidelines in the use, preservation, and conservation of the world's most precious resource. Be prepared to hear "Water is the new oil" in the new year and for years to come. Because it's true.

- **Augusta National and the USGA.** Both bodies nominated African-American women, to membership and leadership posts. I could say "about time," but I'll take "better late than never."

- **The National Women's Golf Alliance (NPGA).** The creation of four leading women's golf associations, it announced a "Rolling Out the Green Carpet to Women" program that should help women find courses that actually welcome them. The industry had better wake up to the fact that women are the next force in golf. And I don't mean only on "Ladies' Day."

- **PGA of America.** Kudos to the world's largest working sports organization for naming Pete Bevacqua its new CEO. I've had the pleasure of working closely with this Georgetown-educated lawyer and am convinced he will align golf professionals behind an intelligent business

model while managing the sensitive relationship between golf pros and superintendents. It's about time the "weed-whackers" and "shirt-stackers" understand that we're all in this together.

- **Ernie Els.** Not just for his inspiring win at the Open Championship, but for his Els for Autism Foundation. After struggling with his game for the past few years, and putting his family and particularly his son first and foremost, it is inspiring to see a true champion get his due.

- **Gil Hanse.** This course architect has reached the top of his game by doing great things for ours. His designs are creative and innovative, keeping golfers challenged and coming back for more. I can't wait to see what he does in Rio.

NAYS. THUMBS DOWN (OR A SINGLE FINGER) TO:

- **The confusion regarding long putters, belly putters, and anchoring.** Yes, Rules are important. But golf's governing bodies need to think not just about their paychecks but the millions of golfers who currently play the game and the many millions more who might. Saying something "doesn't look like golf" is a lame excuse, especially if we agree that we need to encourage new players, not turn them away with musty pronouncements and 18th-century attitudes. Times have changed and it's time to consider two sets of rules. Once new golfers reach a higher level, they'll have to follow a slightly different set of regulations: It exists in other sports and the world hasn't come to an end. Getting more people playing golf is much more important than the length of a putter or where it is positioned.

- **Pace of Play as defined by golf's leading associations.** Watching PGA Tour pros stand for what seems like

hours over a two-footer is just wrong. The PGA Tour, USGA, R&A, and LPGA (Caddies lining up their players? Really?) need to do a much better job monitoring the pros' pace of play so good habits trickle down to the rest of us. A few penalties – and announcing them – would help.

- **Tiger Woods.** Golf's best and most exciting player needs to do more than make swing changes. He still can be an inspiration, as both a player and a person. He has the power and ability to move people the way Muhammad Ali did, but he doesn't want to. This is selfish and not in the best interests of our game. Tiger has made buckets of money from us: It's time for him to give back.

- **Ryder Cup Selection System.** It stinks. (Pete Bevacqua, you listening?) Judging by the last few matches, the U.S. Team isn't built to handle tense battles. The PGA of America should take a lesson from hockey, specifically the 1987 Team Canada series against the Russians. Along with Gretzky, Lemieux, and Messier, Team Canada had a bench of grinders, players who know how to win. Winning is measured by heart and guts, not money.
- **Mike Davis and "Jungle Bird."** The US Open trophy presentation was an embarrassment. The "Jungle Bird" man belongs with Nurse Ratchet. But Davis, the USGA's Executive Director, should have demonstrated better self control and left security to those trained for the job.

- **Johnny Miller.** This misinformed media motor mouth makes superintendents miserable week after week blaming every missed putt on grain. But the greens at major events are mown at less than .100 cm so there is no grain or any of its cousins – down-grain, cross-grain, down-breeze grain, drainage water grain,

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double grain, or lateral grain, not to mention the precious "Poa here at Pebble Beach that grows toward the setting sun." Turfgrass does not have a photosensitive response to the sun. We are three decades removed from Johnny's heyday as a player, and someone needs to explain to him that agronomic practices have improved dramatically.

The envelope, please. The winner of the inaugural Grainy Awards is Johnny Miller. Congratulations, and best of luck to all the other contestants. But if these same candidates are still on the ballot next year, golf has bigger problems than my opinions. **GCI**