

It's summer and that means contractors are hard at work building award-winning golf courses. What better time to pick on them? So on behalf of the architects, superintendents and clients who love working with the people who whip out ... err ... build America's best courses, here are 10 stupid things contractors do to mess up the process:

1. The contract is signed, and the client suddenly works for the contractor. Why do clients pay all that money to be told how it's going to be? Why is it that contractors believe clients don't know what they want as soon as the ink dries? OK, well, if you the client are going to change your mind all the time, you know what that means? Time for ...

2. Change orders unlimited. Contractors love change orders because issuing them makes them more money.

It wasn't in the original plans but the client wants that nursery of mounds removed — even though the contractor thought it would frame the driving range nicely. It's a change order.

3. When all else fails, install a catch basin or a sump. Contractors love man-made, underground drainage. Forget that surface drainage stuff or getting water to move the way it wants to go. Just cut out a sump, write a change order for more gravel, send that water straight down (where it belongs), and tell it to come back as something more desirable.

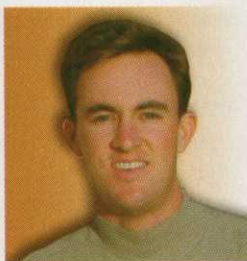
4. When all else fails, sod it. After all, contractors don't have to maintain the stuff or pay for it. They just need to get out of town as fast as possible.

5. Create incentives for the job supervisor to rush and cut corners. You gotta love it when the lead guy on the job gets a bonus for working fast and furiously. He saves some money here and whips out a hole there because the crew needs to get to the next gig. What a recipe for creating sturdy, enduring golf courses.

6. They are never wrong. Has a contractor ever made a mistake? Of course not. Since the contractor is now running, designing and controlling this job, it has all the answers. That is if you can get the contractor

Time to Pick On Golf's Contractors

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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on the phone at the next job site, where it has already set up shop before finishing your job.

7. A contractor loves to tell you what it did on the last job, and its employees aren't afraid to drop names. "You want to do what?" the contractor says. "Did you say you want this done differently than we normally do things? Well, we just did a job with a big-name PGA Tour pro who never made it for a site visit, but he didn't mind how we operate."

8. When all else fails, stake it. What is the deal with contractors and their stakes? Everywhere you look, they have stakes. They stake every portion of tees, bunkers, mounds, greens and future blades of grass. People wonder why so many courses look manufactured or acutely resemble the last award winner? Could it be this connect-the-dot methodology? Architects who let features get built this way are also to blame.

9. Contractors put more energy into decorating their on-site trailers than the construction of the course. The contractor worries about where to hang all of its awards and the master plan its employees never look at. "And where should be hang the Babes of the NASCAR Circuit calendar?" a worker asks. "It was a big hit on the last job, so let's use it again even if it's two years old. It will soften the blow when the client comes to dispute our updated bill — the one with all the pricey change orders."

10. And about those changes you want to make? Did I mention they are never shy about issuing costly change orders — even when the changes are to correct their own mistakes?

Geoff Shackelford is currently polishing the text for his next book, How to Win Friends and Influence People In the Golf Business. He can be reached at geoffshackelford@aol.com.