

It's a little known fact that Santa Claus is actually a fanatical golfer. Yup, when he's not making toys or doing personal appearances, St. Nick plays to a four handicap and is a member at Pine Valley and Augusta (which made special exemptions in their membership requirements to allow an elf to join).

The Jolly Old Hacker even has a subscription to *Golfdom* and makes a point of keeping up with what's going on in the maintenance and management side of the game. In fact, he dropped by our Global HQ in Cleveland (which is *way* too close to the North Pole) the other day and gave me an exclusive list of who's been Naughty and who's been Nice around the industry this year.

Naughty: The marketing gurus at Titleist who hired Monty Python alum John Cleese to portray architects as wacky, anti-technology wingnuts in a new series of commercials. Cute idea, but designers are right to be concerned about plutonium clubs and kryptonite balls making their creations — and many of the world's great classic courses — obsolete as championship venues. Titleist gets a lump of coal in its corporate stocking for making fun of a serious issue.

Nice: On the upside, the blue plaid jacket worn by Cleese in the spots is actually a little less painful to the eye than the ASGCA's infamous fire-engine red tartan.

Naughty: Green committees that have already pushed the panic button and cut maintenance budgets for next year. To paraphrase a famed political slogan, "It's the product, stupid!" It sounds cynical, but the downturn in rounds this past year has been no worse than a bad weather year. The science of meteorology is a much more effective predictor of how often people will play than the "science" of economics. Santa says short-sighted types who sacrifice quality for a few bucks will get a lump of coal ... and permanent reassignment to the food-and-beverage committee.

Nice: Developers and bankers who have reconsidered the need for more \$20 million "ego" courses and are taking a harder look at scaled-down facilities that are friendlier to higher handicappers and newcomers to the game.

Naughty: Scam artists who annually send out bogus invoices for "cleaning supplies" or "parts"

Naughty & Nice: Santa's Golf List

BY PAT JONES



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to golf courses and other businesses. Many of these get lost in the shuffle and are paid. These clowns get a lump of coal ... upside the back of their heads.

Nice: Superintendents who post messages on Internet forums to alert others to these con games.

Naughty: Local chapter members who only show up for "golf" meetings (you know who you are). Santa gives you a set of garage sale Northwesterns and forces you to play them for two years.

Nice: The handful of dedicated individuals who seem to volunteer year-after-year to lead local associations and advance the profession. A good example: the folks who write and edit chapter newsletters who — despite having full-time jobs — manage to get their publications out every month. Next time you see your chapter editor (or any other volunteer), make sure to say, "Thanks."

Naughty: Osama bin Laden. He's not technically in our industry, but Santa has a special present for him ... a lump of coal glued onto a 5,000-pound "bunker-buster" bomb.

Nice: The amazing array of companies, national and local golf associations, clubs and others from around the industry who responded with equipment, goods and cash for the victims of Sept. 11. Is this a great business or what?

By the way, while he was here, Santa dropped off *Golfdom's* Christmas present a little early ... and it wasn't a lump of coal. On the contrary, it was a national Folio: Editorial Excellence gold award, one of the most prestigious honors in magazine journalism. I guess the judges didn't think we were too naughty ... which is *nice*.

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