

If it has not been apparent after three years, this column is usually meant to serve as a locker-room bulletin board item for you to secretly post in the night while golfers are home shining their irons for tomorrow's rounds.

Sure, some of my course builder friends use this space and the accompanying photograph for their dart boards, but my real hope is to provide those in the golf business with commentary to photocopy and say to your golfing clientele, "See, I'm not the only one who thinks of this stuff!"

As the United States gets back on its feet and the golf business tries to survive the economic downturn, this space will continue to devote its 600 words to something you can post on locker-room bulletin boards. It's vital that golfers start receiving more information about the traditions of the game along with the elements that make some courses more interesting than others.

Most of all, this column is to help you help your golfer clients realize that course design and maintenance deserve their interest and respect because they aren't going to find such information in the major golf publications.

One initial element that many in golf continue to struggle with is the color of turf and the shadings of a course. Many of us find the rugged, multicolored, subtle hues of classic courses comforting. There's real beauty in modeled colors of old greens, in the slight variations of green in the fairway, in the warm browns of their sands and in the variety of shades found in natural native zones within the course.

But most golfers (and yes, some superintendents and architects) feel that different shading is a sign of weakness, an indication that maintenance standards aren't up to par. They insist that golfers want their sand lily white, their bunker edges cleanly edged, their green grass the same lush shade throughout and, lord knows, their water blue. But these standards are expensive and time-consuming to create, and ultimately not very distinctive.

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## Let Nature Direct the Color of Golf

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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blamed on Augusta National, but it's really more of a fascination with "look-at-me" colors instead of those we find in nature.

Perhaps your deep green, your basic blue and your typical white look good on television or in magazine photographs. But such a consistent set of colors and a sameness to the grass lacks character when you're playing. After a few holes, the human eye has no new exciting looks to take in, and the course appears plain. Similar to the way pristine bunkers lose their fear factor, a golf course that lacks any subtle variance in color loses its "wow" factor.

Think of some of the great courses of the world — Pine Valley, Cypress Point, Pinehurst #2, Shinnecock Hills, The National Golf Links and Sand Hills. They not only are thought-provoking to play, but they are multicolored. Your eyes are enamored with their features. They are bold and vibrant to see, but they're never overwhelming.

They most certainly do not resemble anything else in the world, and no one notices the occasional shift in grass color because they are so caught up in all of the other lively features.

Color must be put into perspective because so much time and manpower is wasted on creating clean, raw-colored golf courses. Sure, such facilities look professional from a distance, but they appear bland when you get to know them over time. Worse, their playing characteristics are likely lacking.

The courses presenting a modeled, subtle range of colors are usually those where the turf is actually healthy, firm and conducive to playing golf. That is the point after all, isn't it?

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