

ASGCA: Preserve the Great Golf Courses

Editor's note: The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) recently submitted this position paper — The Impact of Golf Equipment on the Game of Golf — to be published in Golfdom. It has been edited for length.

The balance between preserving golf's integrity and encouraging a free market in the manufacture and selection of golf equipment has been an ongoing battle throughout the last century. Today, with 300-yard drives commonplace, the great layouts of the past are (once again) being rendered defenseless. Hazards placed at strategic distances are obsolete, and extra room no longer exists to add additional tees. The strategic principles that guided the design of all the great layouts in the 1920s and 1930s can no longer keep up with the state of today's game. Unfortunately, the onus of adjusting to technology is still falling on the golf courses.

To protect the hallmark designs of its forebears, the ASGCA endorses a modification to the ball that results in a percentage decrease on its flight/distance. Such a solution would have the greatest effect on the longer hitter, while having a lesser effect on the high-handicappers who support the game and find it challenging enough. Distance is its own reward, no matter the relative scale it is measured on.

While maintaining free enterprise among manufacturers in the design and production of golf equipment is a tradition of the game, the control over the parameters in which that production takes place must be absolute. The fate of golf's value and integrity is inherent in that control.

Golf is played differently today than ever before, with developing effects that are eroding the game's traditions. Inaction today is complicity in the deterioration of the game tomorrow. We urge the USGA and Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews to take the necessary steps to preserve the great golf courses of the world.

Prepared by Bobby Weed, Member of ASGCA Board of Governors

Quotable

"Better watch out while you're looking for your ball in there. If there's one place you can get deer ticks, it's at Deere Run."

— Bobby Fields, salesman for Finch Turf Equipment in North Wales, Pa., joking to his playing partners while they all searched for a golfer's lost ball in the bushes while playing the TPC at Deere Run in Moline, Ill.

"That's what I hear from the time I get here in the morning until the time I go home — 'Kachunk, kachunk, kachunk, kachunk.' "

— Steve Bailey, superintendent at Deer Park GC in Milwaukee, on golfers who (inadvisably) try to bit out of the trees that line the fairways of his course.

"I was 11. I got straight As, had two recesses a day, had the cutest girlfriend and won 32 tournaments. Everything's been downhill since."

— Tiger Woods, answering Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly's question about the happiest period of his life (cnn.com).

"Oh, yeah. Oh, hell yes."

— Mike Scott, creator of the struggling golfsat.com, when asked if the \$9.5 million the company initially raised is gone. But Scott says the money was well spent, and he's not giving up on golfsat.com.

Thankful for the 'Net

On Sept. 8, PBI/Gordon's Gary Custis posted this message on a GCSAA online forum: attention golf course superintendents and other turf professionals important notice from PBI Gordon regarding Bensumec 4LF. Please do not apply until further notice. We have re-

ceived reports from several golf courses that have experienced yellowing on turf greens following application of a particular lot number of this product. We are investigating these reports.

Later, it used its Web site to recall the product.

The moral of this story? Before the Internet, it took weeks for a company to get out such an important message. The extended time it took only led to more turf damage, not to mention a company's reputation.

The Internet has its drawbacks, but this is a classic case of one of its advantages.