

Designs on Golf

■ ARCHITECTURE

When he was fed up, confused or just bored, sportswriter Jimmy Cannon used to pen a column titled, "Nobody Asked Me,

But..." To carry on this vital journalistic innovation introduced to yours truly by the late, great *Los Angeles Times* sports columnist Jim Murray... nobody asked me, but ...

■ The Ocean Course at Kiawah Island sent out a press release announcing that it's now offering "walking caddies." What other types of caddies are there besides the kind who walk?

■ Speaking of former Ryder Cup venues, The Belfry proved to be a splendidly banal architectural marvel yet again. And the Europeans have selected even more American-looking and playing courses for the next few overseas Cups. Not that it helps our boys.

■ Has anyone noticed the ever-less-humble comments from architects praising their own design work? Try this one from Greg Norman, commenting on his Doonbeg GC in Ireland: "Doonbeg is the epitome of what links golf is all about. This is probably the most natural experience that modern golf has ever delivered."

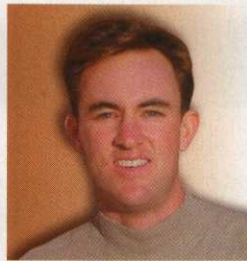
Then there's Tom Doak. He just returned from Down Under after seeing the first five holes under construction at his latest and told an Internet discussion group that his next course was the "eighth wonder of the world." You were joking, right Tom?

■ Certified superintendent Karl Olson undertook and completed the single-greatest restoration work that modern golf has seen with his efforts at The National Golf Links of America. Olson, who left the course a few months ago, spawned a movement and salvaged an American classic after years of neglect. Comparisons with historic photographs look eerily identical to the C.B. Macdonald holes. Olson's presence will be missed at America's version of the Old Course at St. Andrews. Let's hope the people of Southampton, N.Y., appreciate the disparity he unraveled.

■ One developer, grumbling about the downturn in the golf business, is telling folks about his efforts to start a new trend by making golf more fun. His next course will have 100-yard-wide fairways on an 8,200-yard John Daly-

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BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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designed course. Then he told a noted golf writer that the most important element of all was to give the customers "perceived value." Keep up that attitude and you'll be getting "perceived customers" paying you "perceived money."

■ The USGA is preparing to buy New York city's old Russian Tea Room restaurant for a cool \$16 million and turn it into a golf museum. The thinking is a new museum location will get more traffic and generate enthusiasm for the sport. I can't wait to hear about the number of new golfers spawned from this. Sounds like USGA will be creating a bunch of "perceived golfers."

■ It's fun to watch super-slick PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem maneuver around the Martha Burk mess. But he's even slyer when ducking the Tour's difficulty finding 2003 sponsors. The commissioner apparently has a few people still believing that companies are dropping out because of the economy, not the exorbitant cost to host a dull event in a market flooded with too many tournaments. Sponsorship entails a minimum of \$6 million for one week of golf with no guarantee Tiger is coming. What a deal.

■ And then there's the Senior Tour — excuse me, the "Champions Tour." The Senior Tour could lose as many as 12 events next year, but it will probably be closer to seven. Cutting 15 would have been a nice start.

■ And finally, nobody asked me, but "Champions" like Allen Doyle sure are compelling to watch. I was lucky enough to see him toss his putter toward his daughter/caddie during the second round of an event following a three-putt. He missed his target/daughter. The putter nicked a spectator in the leg. All Doyle managed was a nod and waist-high wave in lieu of an apology.

Hey, these guys are good!

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