

Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

It's great news that the Great White Shark, a.k.a. Greg Norman, is on board with GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf. I applaud his decision to get involved on behalf of superintendents, and I wish him godspeed.

I just don't expect many of his high-profile PGA Tour colleagues to follow anytime soon.

Do I sound fatalistic? Maybe I am. It would be fabulous for more high-profile members of the golf industry to take a position *other* than addressing a golf shot when it comes to the industry that makes them millionaires. But, frankly, they don't seem overly interested.

Does it ever get under your skin that the third-highest paid staff member at a golf club (you) making an "average" of \$67,000 a year has a bullseye painted on his or her back by the environmental activists? Those same superintendents battle bureaucrats to preserve the game, while millionaire-touring pros spend their lives on the golf courses and are willing to let you take all the heat.

Golfers rarely defend us publicly. When the Shark puts the bite on them to donate to environmental research, I wonder if they'll be willing to roll up their sleeves and trade in the dollar sign for a bullseye.

Those immaculate conditions they enjoy don't come out of a jug. We use legal products to fight off bugs, weeds and turf diseases so they can complain about how grainy the greens are or how soft the fairways are as they rake in the dough.

Why hasn't televised golf ever challenged a story like Jake Tapper's now infamous "Toxic Fairways?" Maybe it's time a high-profile member of the golfing elite comes out saying, "What a bunch of garbage. I've spent my life on golf courses. I'm living proof that golf courses aren't dangerous places to play and work."

Just once I'd like to see that happen. We have some pros that support us, but they preach to the choir and tell us what good guys we are. It will be interesting to see if Norman can raise the bar and get his playing companions to put their money and mouths where it counts — first with the research and then with the media and the public.

When the Daytona Beach paper runs an edi-

Thanks For Helping, Greg Norman

BY JOEL JACKSON



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torial titled, "Fairways multiply, but ecological concern doesn't," I'd like to see the executive director of the LPGA (located in Daytona) or a high-profile player like Nancy Lopez or Annika Sorenstam respond to such nonsense instead of one local superintendent writing a letter to the editor. If Annika says it, people listen. If John Smith says it, who cares?

Maybe the superstars have it figured out. Ignore it, and it doesn't exist. I don't expect to change a radical's mind, but when the media gets it wrong over and over, I do take exception and look for a little justice.

I don't know why I expect PGA Commissioner Tim Finchem, Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus or Annika Sorenstam to speak out. Maybe I just expect it from leaders who make a good living from the game.

Within the halls of the PGA, it seems the issues in golf are why Acushnet pulled out of the PGA Merchandise show, the tough pin placements at Riviera, and who can it get to sponsor a \$1 million purse for the Quad Cities Open. The PGA doesn't have to ignore those issues, but they could partner with us to battle unfair watering restrictions as well as pesticide and fertilizer runoff issues. I know they aren't "experts," but celebrities make headlines. Superintendents are lucky if they have the opportunity to tell the facts in a sentence buried on page A13.

It will be interesting to see how many golf celebrities rally to Norman's side as he takes on a leadership role in an area of the game they have previously shunned or ignored. Until Tiger antes up, I'm going to trade in my Nike swoosh for a Shark shirt.

You go, Greg.

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