

Here is what golf's higher-ups have been saying this summer about distance increases and the consequences for golf. Although *Golfdom* readers may think

I'm the only one who considers this issue, here's proof there are others out there talking about it:

Bill Campbell, former USGA president: "In a nutshell, the phenomenon of this eye-catching, longer-hitting trend caused by new balls and clubs as well as stronger players, all-out swing instruction and modern agronomy is more easily corrected by just shortening the ball, i.e. putting a governor on it. Though politically challenging, this cure isn't rocket science or U.N. diplomacy. The issue cries out for concerted attention, resolve and action — all with a sense of urgency."

Wally Uhlien, CEO, Fortune Brands (Titleist): "The arrival of the power game and the distances achieved by some players are not bringing professional golf to the edge of ruin as recently expressed by a vocal minority."

Greg Norman: "Go to every manufacturer — I represent Titleist — and give them specifications of the ball that was required at Augusta National just for the Masters tournament. You say, OK, every manufacturer makes that ball. If I was a manufacturer, I would love it because I would sell more golf balls. Because amateurs would love to buy a golf ball that Tiger Woods played with the same specifications. So he's going to buy the one that did go longer and then [buy] the Augusta golf ball. I think there's a lot of merit to it, and I would support it."

David Fay, USGA executive director: "Today's golf courses are playing shorter for the best players than ever before. Whether this is a 'problem' or a natural evolution of a healthy sport depends on your point of view — and quite often, your age."

Frank Hannigan, former USGA executive director: "More distance results from changes made to drivers and, more recently, to balls that are designed to react with clubs by departing at a higher launch angle, and with less spin."

Prepare to Go The Distance

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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Ironically, the technological changes do nothing for the average golfer. To take full advantage of equipment innovations, a player must be exceptionally consistent — close to a scratch player. When the average golfer hits a ball in the center of a club, it's an accident. Distance leads to greater expense, to slower golf, and robs us of the meditative pleasure of comparison."

Tom Fazio, architect: "I think it's been exciting for golf. I think the public coming out here and watching those players on that practice tee and hitting those golf balls 280, 300 yards in the air, I think it's great for golf."

Jack Vickers, founder of The International and Castle Pines: "The lively golf ball is killing the game of golf. We're going to ruin this game if we don't do something. We need to make the game competitive again. The other day I saw a golfer hit a five-iron 278 yards to a green. How crazy are we getting? It's going to be a pitch-and-putt game, and it won't be golf as we once knew it. The USGA has not taken the steps it should have taken. They've let this thing go way beyond where it should have gone."

Rich Beem, golfer: "I think any limitation on golf balls is a terrible idea. We're hitting the ball farther because we're better athletes. It's not just the equipment. If we limit ourselves, we'll regress."

Gary Player: "I can tell you right now this ball thing is coming to an end. Otherwise it'll be the demise of golf courses. I guarantee, as sure as I'm sitting here, that the USGA has not had the leadership to do it, and I'm an admirer of the USGA. Something's going to be done in the future, but by whom, I'm not sure."

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