

**S**eeing adventure and misery, I downloaded a recent e-mail attachment from a name that looked familiar. Eloquently titled W32.novarg.a@mm, this up-and-coming attachment had a good ol' time rendering my computer useless until the folks at Symantec cooked up one of their amazing viral fixes.

But while searching the Symantec site, I stumbled across a most fascinating virus that has been eluding worm chasers for some time — the Hootie@mm.win32.

Here's what the Symantec people had to say about the Hootie worm:

For starters, it's a mass-tree planting and fairway-narrowing worm that uses its inflated sense of self to suggest that a golf course be set up to protect the egos of the committee. The worm goes about its task by inflicting harm through rough and little pine trees.

Hootie@mm.win32 sends itself subliminally through e-mails and television broadcasts. Some have reported that the virus is planted through comments made by cheerleading television announcers eager to be liked by Augusta National chairman Hootie Johnson.

The virus embeds itself in the mental hard drives of green chairman, architects, USGA officials and other ego-driven members of the golfing world eager to stop long drives from making courses appear obsolete. The worm alters all logical thinking and mesmerizes the affected souls with the mantra, "We are restoring a premium on accuracy."

The subject, body and e-mail attachment vary. However, the subject of the contaminated e-mail is typically titled "This is what Bobby Jones would have done if he were here today."

Thankfully, Symantec Security Response has developed a removal tool to clean the infections caused by Hootie@mm.win32.

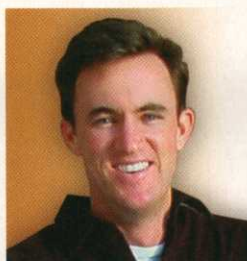
## Technical details

When Hootie@mm.win32 runs, it does the following:

- It creates in the minds of committees or unsuspecting golfers the belief that a golf course is created to inflict punishment and force players to plod carefully through golfing land mines.

# How to Delete the Hootie Worm

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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- The virus removes the following values: fun, adventure, heroics and drama.

- It deletes the spirit of Bobby Jones, Alister MacKenzie, St. Andrews and what golf is all about.

- The virus sends the message that rough and the pine trees are necessary on all courses, even as such elements create more shade, less fun golf and more frustrated golfers, who couldn't break 80 on the wider version of the course.

Hootie@mm.win32 can be removed from the hearts and minds of golfers in one of two ways. If the threat is not critical, simply wait until Nielsen ratings for the Masters drop or play is down at the effected courses. The virus will likely self-destruct when a new chairman takes over for Hootie Johnson or when there are no fairways left to hit at Augusta National.

If Hootie@mm.win32 is posing an immediate danger to your course, we recommend the following removal before the virus renders your course unrecognizable:

1. Force all infected minds to read Bobby Jones' *Golf is My Game* and Alister MacKenzie's *The Spirit of St. Andrews*.

2. Disable System Restore and update your virus definitions from Symantec.

3. Download the following questions from our Web site, which must be answered by all infected souls: Are the Hootie@mm.win32 changes making golf more fun to play or watch? Is this virus really in the best interests of the sport?

4. If these infected souls answer, "Yes," their systems will eventually crash, the virus will erase their hard drives, and it can be determined that their golfing souls have been corrupted.

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*Geoff Shackelford's new book is titled 'The Future of Golf in America. For information about the book, visit [www.geoffshackelford.com](http://www.geoffshackelford.com).*