

Major League Baseball owners agreed to accept \$3.6 million from Sony Studios to slap *Spiderman* logos on bases during weekend games in June — the same weekend that coincided with the release of *Spiderman 2*.

Baseball's chief operating officer rebutted a small group of complainers by saying the move didn't detract from the game, but added to its entertainment value instead. But overwhelmed by millions of complaining "purists," baseball's decision makers backed out of the deal 24 hours later.

Some NASCAR fans claim that pervasive product plugging is simply part of that most soothing of American pastimes. After all, watching loud cars race around in circles is merely interesting. Slap ads everywhere you look, and now it has character.

But here's the really sad news: Golf is next. To enhance "entertainment value," some course owners will do more than install tee signs sponsored by local hardware stores. Soon you'll see revenue-desperate courses auctioning off their names.

Get ready for Rogaine Ridge, Clorox Creek, Levitra Lakes and The Experience at T Mobile Ranch Golf Course.

According to the spokesman for a new Northern California-based company brokering naming rights, this new income "can be passed on to consumers either through better course maintenance or lower green fees." The spokesman prefaced that side-splitter by telling *Golf World*, "should the course owner be so inclined, of course."

Of course. We all know where that new income will go: straight to an owner's pocketbook.

For those involved with big-time tournament courses, brace yourselves for a different kind of commercialism. Within the next few years, expect to be mowing, painting or maybe even constructing architectural advertisements. You can thank TiVo for that.

TiVo is the hi-tech VCR which records programs digitally and makes televised golf tolerable again. Armed with a TiVo remote, the viewer can fast-forward through the excessive number of commercial breaks necessitated by huge purses, declining ratings and corporate greed.

Get Ready for Rogaine Ridge GC

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



CORPORATE GREED
IS COMING TO GOLF,
THANKS IN LARGE
PART TO TIVO

Now that TiVo is affordable (\$140 for the recorder, \$13 a month for the service), golf fans will have a blast watching the final round in about 30 minutes.

Here comes a dreaded interview with the senior vice president of Brand Platform Cross-Polarization. No thanks. Fast forward.

Earlier this year, I TiVo'd the final round of the Ford Championship at Doral. I wasn't going to watch, but heard something amazing happened. So I flew through the first two hours of Ford commercials and the senior VP's contractually obligated interview to see Craig Parry's amazing sudden-death playoff eagle. No commercials — just a few goose bumps.

When tournament sponsors go home and TiVo through events they've put \$8 million into, they're going to start asking how they avoid being TiVo'd.

Look for some enterprising PGA Tour vice president to suggest that fairways, bunkers and greens be employed to ease the multimillion-dollar sponsorship blow. Perhaps we'll see fairway-mowing patterns subtly crafted into a shape closely resembling the sponsor's logo. Or how about bunkers in the shape of products? Disney World has already done that.

Shoot, why not just paint an ad on the putting surfaces so the camera has no choice but to beam the billboard into TV sets across the land?

It's only grass. It will grow back. And most of all, some tour official will insist that golf's entertainment value was increased.

Right. And I have some nice links land on the Gaza Strip I'd love to sell you.

Geoff Shackelford would normally take this opportunity to insert a plug for his current book, The Future of Golf in America, but he doesn't feel that such a promotion would add to the entertainment value of his column. You can e-mail him at geoffshackelford@aol.com.