

**I**'m tired of hearing the term "old school." Once reserved as a descriptive for rap and hip-hop music, "old school" is now a verbal decal for anything that has just a slight bend toward the past.

I thought that we Turfheads might slide by with immunity from citing trendy label makers until just a few weeks ago when I committed the sin myself.

OK, maybe someone else has done it, but this doesn't take away the level of disturbance I now have with myself for attempting a fusion of words combining turf and pop culture.

Where did it happen? How did it happen? I can hear your mind asking the important questions. It came as I described my favorite fairway turf sward.

Instead of using the usual combination of descriptive words like firm, dry, fast, fescue, browntop, lean and mean, I simply said, "old-school surface." The person I was talking to knew exactly what I meant.

And then I started thinking about what common ground "old school" and turfgrass might have. Plenty, it turns out, especially in this day of returning to tradition.

(Wait, "tradition" and "old school" kind of have a link. Maybe I'm on to something!)

Perhaps the next round of top-100 course ratings will simply have an "old-school" category. Why not? After all, isn't the golf that so many of us now admire so publicly really old "old school?"

But wait! "There's a catch," says the client. There's always a catch with clients and this one isn't unlike them all.

This one wants that "old-school" surface, but he wants it with a "degree of sophistication." And I just realized that my fancy use of a catch phrase has caused a problem.

Like the guys from the Discovery Channel's *American Chopper* who are building an "old-school chopper with new-school parts," I'm being asked to help someone create something new that's supposed to be old looking.

Unlike custom motorcycle builders Paul

## The Good and Bad When It Comes to 'Old School'

BY DAVE WILBER



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Teutel Sr. and Paul Teutel Jr., we in golf construction don't really do "theme bikes." (Well, maybe some people have.) I'm pretty sure that if I came to a client and told him that my turfgrass paint job is going to be just like a vintage hot-rod paint job, I'd be finished with a capital "F."

You see, it seems absurd when you look at it like that, but the truth is we are being asked more and more to do things or re-do things in a new way and make them look old.

It's a level of sophistication that not many people can appreciate, and I'm not always sure we make the mark as well as we should. For instance, I cringe every time I see a new facility compared to some great old facility.

Sorry, but the Royal Dornoch Golf Club is the Royal Dornoch Golf Club because it's the Royal Dornoch Golf Club. We just don't go to some ugly piece of ground in anywhere U.S.A. and say we're building the Royal Dornoch Golf Club.

That's the bad use of "old school." The good use comes in the fact that we can recognize that the old ways shouldn't just be thrown out because they have some age on them.

Now more than ever, the ideas of tradition come to us in a good way to be studied, accepted and adapted.

Maybe all of us can look forward to one day being called "old school," and everyone will understand how cool it really is.

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