

**T**he brass at *Golfdom* would not OK the thousands of dollars in holiday gifts that I wanted to spend on golf's power players. So, just between us, here's what I would have bought them.

For **Peter Dawson**, secretary of the R&A, who said at the British Open that "all this discussion that players are hitting the ball further is not true." Now, the 2005 Open's average driving distance shot up 27 yards from last year. Behind the scenes, Dawson was telling people that the next time St. Andrews hosts the Open, something will have been done to slow down the golf ball. If I could afford it, Peter, a beautiful titanium-plated safety muzzle normally reserved for yapping Chihuahuas.

For **Tom Doak**, the famous golf architect who works around the world and who registered nearly 1,500 posts on architecture Web site *golclubatlas.com* this year. If I could afford it, Tom, an Internet-ready wireless laptop that would allow you to post from atop a bulldozer.

For **Hootie Johnson**, the head man at Augusta National, who announced more changes that will stretch the course to more than 7,400 yards for next year's Masters. If I could find them on e-Bay, Hootie, I'd buy you several dozen boxes of the mysterious "Distance R.I.P." ball that a golf manufacturer distributed to demonstrate how awful the game would be if top players could only drive it 310 instead of 340.

For **Jack Nicklaus**, retired all-time golfing great, whose name was stamped on the other side of those "Distance R.I.P." balls. That's right, the manufacturer showed its appreciation for Jack's devotion to the game by sarcastically imprinting, "This is the ball Jack wants you to play." If I could afford them, Jack, I'd enlist some persistent attorneys to make calls on your behalf to find out which manufacturer has no class.

For **Brian Curley**, the golf architect whose hit single "U.S.G.A.," a spoof of the Village People's Y.M.C.A., was warmly received on *SI.com* this year. If I could make a few calls, Brian, I'd secure a recording contract for you. In the meantime, let's get that tune up on Kazaa.

For **Donald Trump's** golf course investors, who

## If I Were Buying for the Bigwigs ...

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



THE PERFECT

HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR

DOAK, NICKLAUS,

FAY AND OTHERS

ponied up (at least according to The Donald) \$264 million to date for the purchase, renovation and upgrades to Trump National Los Angeles. If I could, suckers . . . err . . . investors, I'd let you go back in time and buy Google stock instead.

For **David Fay**, USGA executive director who announced the organization's new policy on "gender reassigned" golfers with a straight face, suggesting that the "movement in this direction is inexorable." If I could, David, I would push Bud Selig aside and get you that dream job: commissioner of baseball. No more nutty executive committee meetings to discuss X and Y chromosomes!

For **Tim Finchem**, commissioner of the PGA Tour, who was asked about the success of Harding Park's \$16 million renovation and what he would do if he were the city of San Francisco. He replied, "If this is my baby, but it was not for profit — I would want some texture to the communication of this place." If I could, Tim, I'd get you that master's in business administration you deserve, all so you can stop talking like that!

Finally, for the **Golf Digest Panel**, which this year bumped several classics off the Top 100 list in favor of overbuilt, resistant-to-scoring bores and probably cost a few superintendents their jobs. If I could, well, the first idea isn't fit for print. But, ideally, I'd have Sports Media Group send copies of my latest book, "Lines of Charm: Brilliant and Irreverent Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes from Golf's Golden Age Architects," to all panel members — one, so that I can shamelessly plug it here; and, two, because I know you panelists don't read. My book has lots of pretty drawings for you raters to look at.

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