

**S**ome hopeless romantics will have you believe that “love” means never having to say you’re sorry. And they might make a good case for that contention, based on Erich Segal’s novel, “Love Story.”

As any serious student of the game knows, golf is right up there with love. In fact, passion knows no bounds when it comes to the click and feel of a perfectly struck golf shot or the sound of the ball as it rattles in the bottom of the cup.

The lines, curves and colors of the latest golf clubs are pleasing to the eye. There’s the subtle satisfaction you feel as your fingers caress the latest dimple pattern on the newest high-tech golf ball. And the sensation is made even better if they are free as a tee gift at a tournament.

Perhaps you are in a long-term relationship with a set of clubs that have taken you to the heights of success or carried you through long periods of hack and whack when your golf skills got rusty.

Whether the equipment is old or new, we hope our search for that perfect combination of swing mechanics and equipment results in a perfect marriage that lasts happily ever after or until the United States Golf Association’s (USGA) Coefficient of Rebound (COR) do us part. In each round, the honeymoon usually ends with the first triple bogie. And as the three putts add up, thoughts of divorce are contemplated. But the counselor at the 19th hole makes it all better.

The camaraderie on the links, the fun and serious competition, the rub of the green and those fatalistic bounces that separate good from great and the birdie from a bogey . . . all these things and more define the game of golf. Strategy, skill and luck in varying amounts take us on the thrill ride of the game, and not once have I mentioned turfgrass conditions.

And that is the point of this exposition. It isn’t the turf that is the primary driver in the game; it is the game itself. Perfectly manicured golf courses are beautiful works of art, but alas I must report they are not the end-all measure to the enjoyment of the game. I have played golf shots off concrete, asphalt,

## Golf Means Never Having to Say You’re Sorry

BY JOEL JACKSON



IT ISN'T THE TURF  
THAT IS THE  
PRIMARY DRIVER  
IN THE GAME; IT IS  
THE GAME ITSELF.

crushed rock, wooden planks, pine straw, St. Augustinegrass, Bahiagrass and occasionally the intended warm- or cool-season turf planted through the green. All of which goes a long way, I suppose, to explain my 19-20 stroke handicap. Although my handicap has suffered over time (I once was a 10), it is my playing time that affected my scoring, not course conditioning.

The challenge to execute the necessary golf shot is not a function of the begonias on the tee box or the edging of the cart path. I still hit a miracle shot now and then and it keeps me coming back. For true golfers, the real lovers of the game, you never have to say you’re sorry for the condition of your golf course. If the tee blocks are lined up square, and the cups are set on the greens, the game is on. Golf doesn’t care, or it shouldn’t care, whether you have a crew of six or a crew of 30, or a budget of \$250,000 to more than \$1 million.

The No. 1 mandate is to keep the greens rolling as smoothly and consistently as possible. Faster speeds are a function of budget, ego and talent of the superintendent and equipment manager trying to balance turfgrass survival vs. the death wishes of the members of Club Wannabe.

But for real hardcore golfers, the weekend warriors of the links and the bag draggers who love this game, golf means never having to say you’re sorry, maybe just an occasional “Fore!”

---

*Certified Superintendent Joel Jackson retired from Disney’s golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida GCSA.*