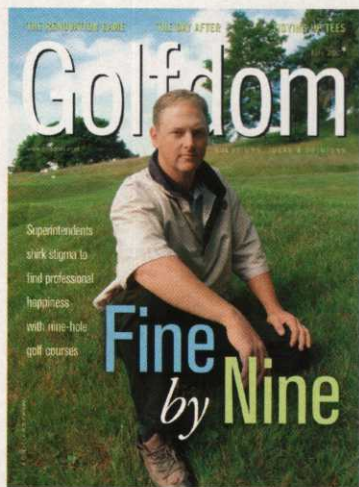


We've Got Mail

LETTERS FROM THE FIELD



Fine With Nine?

Yes, I am fine with nine (July cover story). I have been the superintendent of and have worked at a couple of 18-hole courses, and the nine-hole course where I currently work suits me just fine.

The best part about my job is that I have 10 children (golf greens) to look after versus 18 or so. Salesmen have snubbed me in the past. They seem interested until they discover I am at a nine-holer. Then it's, "Oh, you take care of a nine-hole golf course?" Then I never hear from them again.

The stress level is somewhat lower and, although I only have two part-time workers, I feel like I can pay more and give more attention to the 60 acres I manage vs. 180 acres or more.

Steve Taylor, Superintendent
Tri-County Country Club
Corbin, Ky.

Although my hours are longer at my club like other nine-hole superintendents, I know I'm a crucial part of the operation and feel very proud when we are recognized for excellence, like receiving an award for best nine-hole course in the Chicago-area two years in a row.

My course has a great location, and when temperatures are really hot or cold or windy, I notice that golfers will tolerate nine holes instead of braving 18. We might not make as much on our nine-hole green fees as an 18-hole facility, but like the saying goes,

"Many small sticks can be stronger than one big stick."

Doug Davis, Superintendent
Flagg Creek Golf Course
Countryside, Ill.

My nine-hole Donald Ross golf course is in great condition. I see local golfers line up to play 18-hole courses in worse condition because they want variety.

When I took this job, there was talk about adding nine holes. Four years later, it looks like it will never happen.

This position was the best learning experience I could ask for. I do not feel looked down upon by my peers. However, I feel it is harder for me to take the next step in my career path. I am happy as a nine-hole course superintendent, but I sometimes feel like I have outgrown my position.

Shane A. Miller, Superintendent
Tumblebrook Golf Course
Coopersburg, Pa.

Is Golf a Sport?

Editor's note: In July we asked readers, "Is golf a sport or a skill?" We asked this question in light of Angel Cabrera's U.S. Open win. The beefy, cigarette-sucking Cabrera defeated the sculpted and sineuwy Tiger Woods by one stroke at Oakmont Country Club to gain the nation's championship. Here's how some readers answered the question.



Golf is not a sport. Golf is a game, as is bowling, chess and poker. Our media mistakenly calls any competition a sport much as they mistakenly call George W. Bush a leader.

A sport can be a game, but a sport is an athletic competition where the determining factor is one's athletic ability. Also, in order for a competition to be a sport there must be a defense.

Hunting and fishing are not sports because they meet neither requirement. The other requirement is that the competition be

between two or more persons, therefore golf can't be included.

Richard J. Haberstroh
Emerald Greens Golf Course
St. Louis

I've been around golf as long as I can remember, and I recall hearing this same argument time and time again. I believe that golf should be considered a skill rather than a sport.

Steve Taylor, Superintendent
Tri-County Country Club
Corbin, Ky.

Golf is a sport that takes a lot of skill, natural ability and mental focus. Angel Cabrera is a strong bull, who happens to smoke. Golf is one of two sports in which you use every muscle in your body. Why do you think gymnasts, aerobic instructors and basketball, football and baseball players are so sore and contorted when they get done playing a round of golf, even with a golf car? Muscle memory.

I used to walk — carrying my clubs — 63 holes to 72 holes a day on a 7,500-yard course in Idaho. Man, those were the days. It takes stamina many times over to do that. I'm not talking about your golf car riders, who I think have ruined the integrity of golf and the physical aspect of it. As a holder of 29 course records and many amateur wins, I can only say I miss the day.

Joe Hubbard, Certified Superintendent
Broken Sound Golf Course
Boca Raton, Fla.

Editor's note: We sought Webster for its definition of "sport." Here's what the dictionary had to say: An athletic activity requiring skill or physical prowess and often of a competitive nature, as racing, baseball, tennis, golf, bowling, wrestling, boxing, hunting, fishing, etc.

Executives Out of Touch With Workers

Once again in America, the new way of business has not learned from all the mistakes in years past ["Where is Respect For Its Own?" (June, page 32), which discussed the USGA's

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■ LETTERS FROM THE FIELD

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decision to cut staff benefits.] Management 101 and the No. 1 rule from that class is "take care of the people who take care of you." To be in the USGA, you must be away from your family. There is no compensation high enough to replace that, believe me. I have lived it from my own experiences in corporate golf. To take care of your people and to show you care, you must provide some perks that motivate them, such as college tuition programs.

How do millionaires become that way? They take away from the people who helped them succeed nine times out of 10. I have had the privilege of working with many of the Green Section ladies and gentlemen for many years, and to cut anything from their jobs that was included before is a travesty.

PS: Next time there is a trip across country, perhaps Walter Driver and David Fay should take a minibus. Empathy begins at home.

Joe Hubbard, Certified Superintendent
Broken Sound Golf Course
Boca Raton, Fla.

Speeding Up Play to Create More Rounds

Editor's note: In an online column, Golfdom asked readers to share opinions on speed of play, most notably the need for more six-hole courses. Here's what some readers had to say:

When I was changing cups years ago, we had an oversized cup we used for low-key corporate outings. Not a coffee can as a gag, but a cup about 1.5 times as big as the regulation cup used by all golfers today.

Why not let the pros and early-morning golfers use the regulation (small) cup and normal fun golfers use the oversize cup?

We would play after work using the oversize cup, and it sped up things considerably. Even with pretty quick greens (which everyone likes, but which take a long time to get all golfers to putt out successfully), we would shave a couple minutes per hole as there was minimal time spent lining up the 4-footer, which as we all know is the one length all golfers spend the most time on. If you saved three minutes per hole, you'd save 54 minutes



for an 18-hole round. And we were good golfers. A higher-handicap foursome would probably save five or more minutes per hole. And the course layout, cut, grassing, tees, equipment can all stay the same.

It's a simple, easy and cost-effective way to get me — like yourself, a father with kids who need a lot of my time — back out on the course for a traditional 18 holes in less than four hours.

Of course, the oversize cup with six, nine or 12 holes would be even better for time-strapped people.

J.D. Huseboe
Irrigation salesman
Reinders Turf and Irrigation

I always thought that a nine-hole golf course with every three holes ending at the clubhouse would be great. Then you could have three-, six- and nine-hole leagues and a nice little clubhouse with some food and a bar. Bet it would work!

Steve Tyler
Standard Golf Co.

Only problem is that the United States Golf Association doesn't allow you to post your score from a six-hole round for handicap purposes. Now there is a place where we can start making six holes legitimate.

Helping to make golf a better game,
Kevin D. Coombs, PGA
Owner/General Manager
Beacon Rock Golf Course
North Bonneville, Wash.

We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to David Frabotta at dfrabotta@questex.com, or fax to 216-706-3712. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.