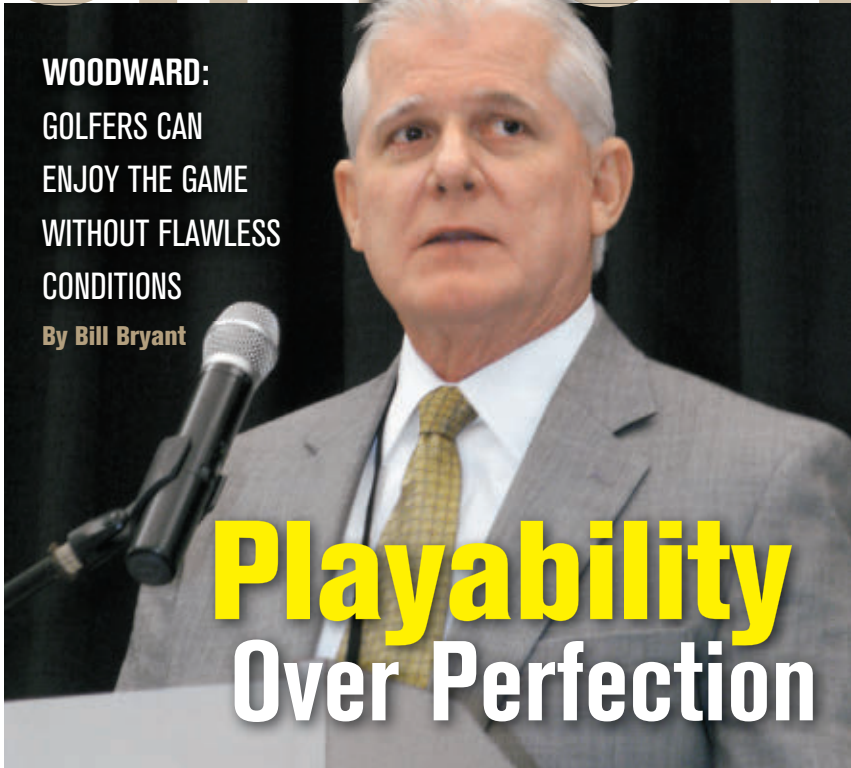


Off The Fringe

**WOODWARD:
GOLFERS CAN
ENJOY THE GAME
WITHOUT FLAWLESS
CONDITIONS**

By Bill Bryant



Playability Over Perfection

Mark Woodward appreciates the pristine splendor of the Augusta National Golf Club, site of last month's Masters Tournament, and other professional tour venues as much as anyone. But the CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America knows those are not the agronomic standards by which his 21,000 members should be judged. Nor are they right for the times.

"People see what they see on TV, and they see the conditions we produced at Torrey Pines (the course Woodward prepared for the 2008 U.S. Open in his role as manager of golf operations for the city of San Diego), and they think that should be translated back to their local golf courses. But that's truly an aberration. It's not

reality," Woodward told a crowd of golf course owners, operators, architects and developers at the Golf Inc. Conference at the World Golf Village in St. Augustine, Fla., recently.

Those conditions might be required for demanding PGA Tour professionals, but Woodward said they're not essential for most players.

"We can still have a quality playing experience and playable conditions and have fun at it without going to the extremes of championship golf," he said. "There just needs to be a balance between expectations and the resources we have to produce those conditions."

Woodward encouraged owners, operators, designers and developers to help take the message of balance and playability back to their clubs and courses, many of which are struggling in a challenging economy.

"There is a lot of pressure on (superintendents and their staffs) to continue to improve (conditions), and expectations continue to rise," he said. "I'm not sure that's the direction we need to go in light of the economy. A big part of our (environmental efforts) is to promote playability, and you all can help us tell that story. We think golfers can go out and have fun without every blade of grass being perfect."

It's ironic that some of the world's most revered courses do not go to the extremes that U.S. courses do to present flawless conditions, Woodward said. "You go to other places in the world, and golf courses aren't maintained to the degree they are here," he said. "But when we go over there to play, we think we've died and gone to heaven. And then we come back here, and we think every blade of grass has to be perfectly green and perfectly in place."

Woodward was asked if he thought "brown was the new green?"

"We don't say brown is the new green," he shot back. "We just talk about the fact that it needs to be playable, but it doesn't have to be perfect."

Woodward is also aware that courses must be sensitive to the expectations their members and customers have for quality playing conditions or risk losing them. "Surveys show that golfers choose to play a particular golf course because of conditions at that course," he said. "So if we let that go down too much, we could shoot ourselves in the foot because golfers may not want to come to that facility for that reason." ■

Bryant is a golf writer from Alpharetta, Ga.

Off the Fringe

Doggone Funny



By Bill Bryant

Gary Player is an unabashed animal lover. The globe-trotting South African has all manner of animals roaming his ranch and golf course in South Africa. He's also a devout environmentalist. So when Advanced Sensor Technology (AST), a company that says its soil sensor system helps golf courses conserve water, came to him with the idea of starring in a video short alongside a lovable tan-and-white bulldog named UgMo, it all seemed a perfect fit.

Player likes what AST is doing in regard to water conservation. And during the promotional video, he professes his affection for the dog UgMo, also the name of an AST company. "I cannot tell you how I love this dog," Player says as he and UgMo romp around on a golf green. "I looked into this dog's eyes and I just saw something. He's something special."

Now, as the late Paul Harvey used to say, for the rest of the story. "I hate that damn dog," Player told a crowd of golf course owners, operators, designers and developers at the Golf Inc. Conference in St. Augustine, Fla., recently. "I was sitting in the car with him, and he pooped in my hand. I was wearing a black shirt and he snotted all over it."

Player was nearly in tears as he told the story, as was his audience. The nearly eight-minute video seems destined to gain cult status for at least a dozen great lines delivered by a wry cast. But the topper is reserved for O'Brien, the superintendent, whose reaction to Player driving away in a black Escalade with O'Brien's dog in the back seat is fall-out-of-your-seat funny.

Until it gets to YouTube, "The Inheritance" can be found at www.ugmo.com. ■

Bryant is a golf writer from Alpharetta, Ga.

**GARY PLAYER PROVES
HILARIOUS IN SHORT
PROMOTIONAL FILM. BUT
ABOUT THAT DOG ...**

Some Heads You Want...



Off The Fringe

Rain Bird Looking for Filmmakers Who Use Water Wisely

Are you a golf course superintendent who dabbles in film-making? If so, check this out. Rain Bird is giving both amateur and experienced filmmakers an opportunity to showcase their creative talents in the 2009 Intelligent Use of Water Film Competition. Now accepting entries, the competition uses the power of film to increase awareness of the need for effective, efficient and responsible water use.

The Intelligent Use of Water Film Competition is open to all narrative, documentary, animated or experimental short films (one to 10 minutes in actual or excerpted run time) that explore methods and ideas to responsibly manage and use the earth's most precious resource. From the general field of entries, two winners will be announced, with a \$6,000 prize for the Jury Award and \$3,000 for the Audience Choice Award.

The competition has also added a new awards category to the mix. Co-sponsored by Questex Media Group, including *Golfdom* magazine, the new Green Industry Award gives golf course superintendents, landscape contractors, landscape architects, specifiers and all professionals who design, install or maintain green spaces an opportunity to showcase their film-making abilities. Entries in this category should also focus on creative ways to use water wisely, with the winner receiving a \$6,000 prize.

"With the Intelligent Use of Water Film Competition's new Green Industry Award, we hope to spotlight their unique perspectives on how to ensure that enough water is available both now and for future generations," said Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd, Rain Bird's corporate brand manager.

Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. (PDT) on Aug. 15. For more information, contact www.IUOWFilm.com. ■

“Quotable

“I'm really disappointed by the GCSAA's decision not to fund any new research for 2009. This is like making a bogey in a round of golf. No matter how well you play after the bogey, you can never make up that lost shot.”

— Paul Jett, certified superintendent of Pinehurst No. 2 and president of the Carolinas GCSA, writing in his column in the March-April issue of *Carolinas Green*.

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