

**F**or those of you who live anywhere near San Francisco, you may not be aware of the epic battle going on between Sharp Park Golf Course and several environmental groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity.

Allow me to paint you the picture of each side of this fight.

Sharp Park is an admittedly under-maintained and poor municipal golf course, designed by uber-architect Alister MacKenzie, with an unbelievable weekend green fee of \$24 for residents. The course has several spectacular holes that border the Pacific Ocean with amazing views. It also has massive drainage problems, which is at the heart of the battle with the environmental groups.

The environmental groups are well-organized and experienced at touting their beliefs that the natural habitat of the area should be expanded, even if it means the closing of the golf course. They point to two animal species currently residing on the golf course as the underlying reason for expansion — the San Francisco garter snake and the California red-legged frog.

Here's how things have progressed. For the past five years, when the ponds of Sharp Park overflow into the fairways and roughs, the water isn't allowed to be pumped off because it might contain frog eggs. There is even discussion of hiring people to walk 50 feet in front of mowers to rescue any frogs and snakes that may be in harm's way.

The environmental groups have threatened a lawsuit against the city of San Francisco over the killing of these endangered species and are calling for a complete restoration of Sharp Park to its natural state as a coastal wetland.

In his May article on Sharp Park, *Sports Illustrated* writer Curt Sampson correctly points out a very interesting fact about the course and these species: "The little snake and big frog wouldn't even be at Sharp Park if the golf course had not been built. A seawall constructed . . . changed the water hazards from brackish to fresh. The San Francisco garter snake and the California red-legged frog are freshwater creatures."

## No One Will Win Sharp Park Dispute

BY CHRISTOPHER S. GRAY SR.



POLITICS WILL MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION IN REGARD TO MACKENZIE GOLF COURSE

The Government Audit and Oversight committee of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors have voted to allow a motion to turn the course over to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to be presented to the full board that would, in all probability, lead to the end of Sharp Park Golf Course.

Allow me to end the suspense for all of you sitting on the edge of your seat. The motion will likely pass and the environmental groups will win . . . again.

This battle being fought between Sharp Park and the environmental groups is not about who's right and who's wrong, but more about what the politicians can allow and still be re-elected the next time the ballots are cast in the city whose motto is, "Gold in peace, iron in war."

The reality of this blatantly disturbing situation is that a compromise could be reached if the environmental groups wanted one. They don't. They know the court of public opinion is on their side, and there's no reason to shake hands and call it a draw — even if it's in the best interest of both sides and the environment. Winning is their only objective.

There are a couple Hail Mary tosses coming down the line for Sharp Park, including an investigation into making the site a historical landmark, effectively putting it out of reach of the environmental groups' arms.

In the end, no one will actually win this battle. Here's why: If the golf course does "win," the golf industry will again be branded as an environmental foe. If the environmental groups "win," we lose an Alister MacKenzie diamond in the rough that everyone could afford to play.

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