

## It's Time for the Leaders to Lead

**G**olf will always be on trial. No matter how many success stories we tell, how many educational seminars we teach, how many frost-filter 30-second spots run during majors or even how fast and firm our courses get, the game will forever face scrutiny due to the scale and resources needed to maintain a golf course.

In fact, the more talented superintendents have become at maintenance and the more able designers have gotten at rearranging the earth, the unintended consequence has become increased hostility toward our sport for its reckless disregard of resources. On occasion the extremists have a point (earthmoving for the sake of earthmoving), but most times they simply are unwilling or unable to look at the majority of positive benefits outweighing the negatives that a golf course brings.

But humor me for a minute, and try to take a truly objective view — throw in the image of fat cats, country club excess and other golf stereotypes, then throw in a down economy — you can understand why there will always be folks putting the game on trial. Shoot, when you've listened to golfers moan about the color of divot replacement sand or a cart path crack, you've probably had days where Ted Kaczynski starts to make sense. Yep, you begin to see yourself sending long diatribes about the evils of committees from your remote cabin, all so you can ultimately self-publish a

**GOLF'S LEADERS SAYING IT'S NOT THEIR DUTY TO DEFEND THE GAME ONLY CONFIRMS THAT THEY'RE GOOD AT ABDICATING RESPONSIBILITY.**

**BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD**



manifesto titled “How Technology Compromised the Greatest Game and Other Neurotic Quibbles as Seen From Eastern Montana Where it’s Really Cold in December.”

This is not to say you should go the Unabomber route. Nor is this an indictment of the impressive “rebuttal” stories in this issue, which are in no way a waste of time. Far from it. They are the stories of people sticking up for the game. These are the stories of the many remarkable people who open the doors each day to the world’s most amazing arenas: golf courses.

Sadly, the same can’t be said for the folks paid lavishly at some of our biggest non-profit organizations, who do not feel the same sense of purpose to take problem solving more seriously. The abdication of responsibility starts with the USGA and R&A’s refusal to slow down the distance chase, leading to longer, acreage-eating courses. However, the average environmentalist hasn’t a clue about that issue. Instead, environmentalists look at green striping or unnaturally lush grass or other quirks of the mod-

ern golf course, multiply them by 20, and soon have themselves convinced that they’d rather take a barefoot stroll around Chernobyl than play a round of golf.

The overpaid “leaders” of the game will say it’s not their duty to defend golf. Their lack of action confirms one thing: They are good at abdicating responsibility. I know because right now there is a Ground Zero for golf and the trial is about to begin. It’s called Sharp Park. It’s an affordable Alister MacKenzie design just south of San Francisco. A group of certifiable, anti-human environmentalists are so determined to get rid of the place and the local politics are so wacky, that they may just win. It’ll be the darkest day yet for golf, and while I salute the folks sticking up for this truly perfect public golf facility, I abhor the people in golf leadership circles who do not understand that this is the trial of golf’s life.

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