

“**H**ello, Seth? This is Jack Hanna.”
Sometimes my cell phone rings and I get an unexpected surprise on the other end. When I receive a phone call from a celebrity outside the golf world — people like Vince Gill, or “Puddy” from *Seinfeld* — I immediately ask myself, what does it have to do with golf?

But then, that’s my job: to figure it out. Somewhere a PR person was nice enough to pass along my cell phone number, and the next thing I know I’m in a conversation with someone I hear on the radio or see on TV regularly, and I have to figure out a way to bring it all back around to golf. That’s where I found myself with Hanna, well known for his many wildlife TV shows and for bringing exotic animals to *Good Morning America* and *Letterman* for the last 30 years.

Wait! Before you flip to Woodward and Danneberger, let me remind you that the reason I was talking to Hanna at all is because Jack is the unofficial M.C. of Rain Bird’s Intelligent Use of Water film competition... and Rain Bird, in partnership with *Golfdom*, will be flying two lucky people to Beverly Hills, all expenses paid, to attend the event. You can bring your wife, your assistant, your general manager (alright, probably not your GM), whomever. I only ask that you bring someone fun with you, because you’ll be hanging out with me and Jack Hanna, and, well, *we like to party*. Just go to www.golfdom.com/IUOW to enter.

Check it out: Though Hanna has never played a round of golf, he sure loves the game. Why? Because he’s an environmentalist... and environmentalists love golf.

For 20 years Hanna lived off the 10th hole at Muirfield Village GC in Dublin, Ohio. That’s when he fell in love with what golf courses offer to those lucky enough to live nearby.

“I’m out there by myself in the woods, the fairway is 50 feet from my house,” Hanna recalled. “I get to walk it and see the deer and the birds and all kinds of animals out there

An “Intelligent” Use of Water?

BY SETH JONES



“WHAT DO THEY WANT, A COMPANY ON THAT LAND? HOUSES ALL OVER?” HANNA ASKED. “GOLF COURSES DIVERT WATER, CONSERVE WATER, RECYCLE WATER.”

on the golf course. I loved that.”

I asked Hanna what he thought about the people out there who complain that golf courses use too much water. Is golf indeed an “intelligent” use of water?

“No matter what you do in this world, somebody’s going to complain. It makes no difference what you do,” Hanna said. “A lot of people play golf. What (critics) don’t realize is, (golf courses are) preserving a lot of land. What do they want, a company on that land? They want houses all over the place? (Golf courses) divert water, conserve water, recycle water. Golf does more conservation than many projects throughout this country.”

Hanna clearly is simpatico with superintendents when it comes to his appreciation for the environment as well as an appreciation for an industry that employs a whole lot of people.

I asked Hanna what to expect at my first IUOW film festival.

“I’ve presented at the Emmys, I’ve done 28 years on *Letterman*, 30 years on *Good Morning America*... this is right up there,” he told me. “It’s going to blow your mind. At least, I hope it does! Maybe I’m building this up too much! It blows my mind.”

I had the pleasure of chatting with Hanna for a while. I’m sad I don’t have more room to share more of our conversation here... like his story of living on an abandoned golf course in Rwanda, or his honorary title of “director of wildlife” at a course in Ohio.

I’ll save those stories for when we’re in Beverly Hills, OK?

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