Vetworking CareerAssistance Communications pesearch & Resources STAY THE COURSE WITH A STRONGER MANAGEMENT TEAM Make your assistant a GCSAA member today.

GCSAA provides assistant golf course superintendents with key benefits to help them gain responsibility and bring more value to your facility.

And when both of you are members, your team can cover twice the ground.

ENROLL YOUR ASSISTANT TODAY AT WWW.GCSAA.ORG/ASSISTANT OR CALL 800-472-7878.



Designs on Golf

ARCHITECTURE

he United States Golf Association (USGA) is so unwilling to address the distance issue in a meaningful way that its officials are now ignoring their own past statements.

Some have been holding out hope that the USGA — the USGA that issued the May 2002 Joint Statement of Principles with the Royal & Ancient Golf Club — would step up to the plate and defend the best interests of the game.

That USGA believed that any further significant increases in hitting distances at the highest level are undesirable. Whether these increases in distance emanate from advancing equipment technology, greater athleticism of players, improved player coaching, golf course conditioning or a combination of these or other factors, they will have the impact of seriously reducing the challenge of the game. The consequential lengthening or toughening of courses would be costly or impossible and have a negative effect on important environmental issues. Pace of play would slow, and playing costs would increase.

In a September *ESPN.com* chat, USGA President Walter Driver logged on to answer questions about, of all things, the Ryder Cup. All he received, though, were questions about the distance issue with a few softballs mixed in ("Is Tiger the best golfer you've ever seen?").

Asked when the USGA would act on the distance issue now that the PGA Tour driving distance average has increased 10 yards since the above statement was adopted, Driver wheeled out this barrow of bologna.

"The facts are the tour distances are nearly flat the last three years," he said. "They went down somewhat a few years ago and then leveled off. So the facts show there hasn't been much increase to show us that we need to act from when we made those statements."

Just so there's no gray area here, consider the PGA Tour Driving Distance average, the primary number the USGA uses to gauge increases or decreases:

2001 average: 279.4 yards 2002 average: 279.8 yards 2003 average: 286.3 yards 2004 average: 287.3 yards

The USGA Keeps Its 'Distance'

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



IS ABDICATING
RESPONSIBILITY,
IT'S TIME FOR A
GRASSROOTS
MOVEMENT TO DEAL
WITH THIS
PROBLEM

2005 average: 288.9 yards

2006 average: 289.6 yards (as of Sept. 10)

Driver is correct in saying the distances are "nearly flat" the last three years. But the Statement of Principles was issued in 2002 — four years ago. Either the 2001 or 2002 averages would be the line-in-the-sand number, which shows an unprecedented 10-yard leap. That certainly qualifies as significant, unless you're the USGA president looking for a way to weasel out of a well-publicized declaration you helped author.

Driver's remark that PGA Tour distances "went down somewhat a few years ago" is, of course, not true. And his line stating "the facts show there hasn't been much increase to show us that we need to act" is confirmation the USGA will go back on its word. Since the USGA is abdicating responsibility, it's time for a grassroots movement to deal with this problem.

In August, the Ohio Golf Association played its Champions tournament with a higher-spinning ball that restored shotmaking and put less premium on distance. While the ball may not be the perfect solution because it discriminated against naturally long hitters, it did restore some sanity by placing emphasis on skill and thought.

A line in the sand was drawn.

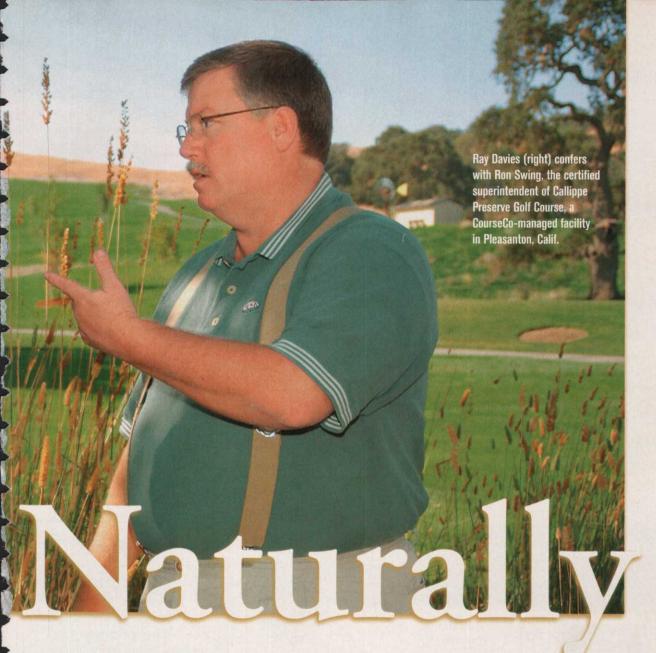
If golfers want to experiment with the ball, the PROsPECT, they can go to www.volvik.com for more information. And don't hesitate to have your golf professional tell sales reps from the major manufacturers that your course would like to buy the rolled-back balls that were submitted for the USGA's phantom ball study.

The USGA just isn't willing to act on the game's behalf — or even stick to its own (statement of) principles.

Contributing Editor and golf design expert Geoff Shackelford can be reached at geoffshac@aol.com.







idyllic design in Burlingame, Calif., and talks about the environmental maintenance programs CourseCo has implemented on the ecologically sensitive site. The course, which sits atop the placid Crystal Springs Reservoir, offers sights to behold from an array of angles.

The view overlooking the 23,000-acre reservoir, part of the Peninsula Watershed that is home to the highest concentration of rare and endangered species in the Bay area, might be the most stunning. The reservoir's vivid blue water sparkles in the late-afternoon sun. Its sandy shore bleeds into a dense stand of timber, that includes cypress, pines and firs. From the golf course, the distant trees fuse to form a dark-green mass of brush that ascends a steep ridge and jets with jagged edges into the soft blue sky.

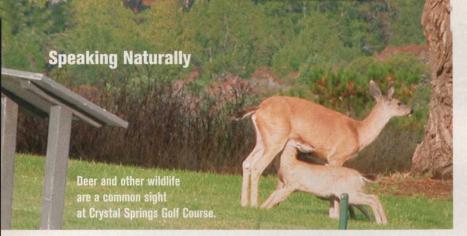
"The scenery is just beautiful here," Davies says.

It's a postcard view that Davies doesn't take for granted. And because the view originates from a golf course — his golf course —it's even more special to him.

That's because Davies has spent a good part of his career trying to convince detractors that golf courses - often hailed as environmental foes because of their perceived lavish use of water, fertilizer and pesticides — can operate in sync with Mother Nature. And Crystal Springs Golf Course, built in the 1920s, offers proof. The course has earned a slew of honors for its environmental accomplishments since CourseCo took over its management in 1996.

Such awards are common with most of CourseCo's properties. The company has made a name for itself in northern California for its

Continued on page 26



CourseCo's Alan Andreasen
has made the best of a
second chance given to
him by his boss Ray Davies.
See Larry Aylward's Pin
High column on page 6

Continued from page 25

environmental expertise. It's a reason why CourseCo was awarded California's prestigious Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award in 2003.

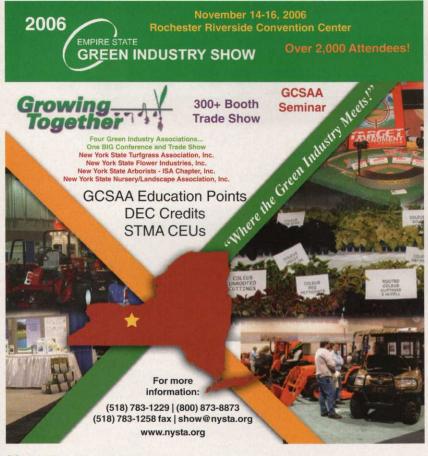
The 48-year-old Davies, a past winner of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's Environmental Stewardship Award, is a force behind CourseCo's environmental achievements. Since joining the company in 1996, Davies has spearheaded an effort to get all CourseCo courses involved with the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP), an education and certification program that instructs golf courses on how to pro-

tect the environment. Audubon International, a not-for-profit organization that helps golf courses implement environmental management plans to improve efficiency and promote conservation, operates the program.

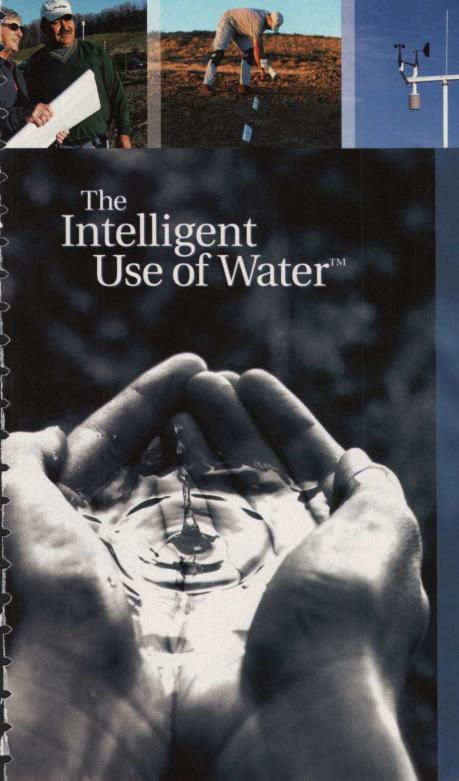
Of the 13 daily-fee golf courses that CourseCo manages, 11 have become Fully Certified Cooperative Sanctuaries, which means the courses demonstrate a high degree of environmental quality by utilizing best-management practices in a number of areas, including environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, outreach and education, chemical-use reduction and safety, water conservation and water-quality management. The two remaining courses should be fully certified by the year's end.

When asked about his environmental prowess, Davies says, "I don't know that I have prowess. I have knowledge. I've dedicated a lot of time to reading up on the subject."

Davies enlightened himself on the subject Continued on page 29





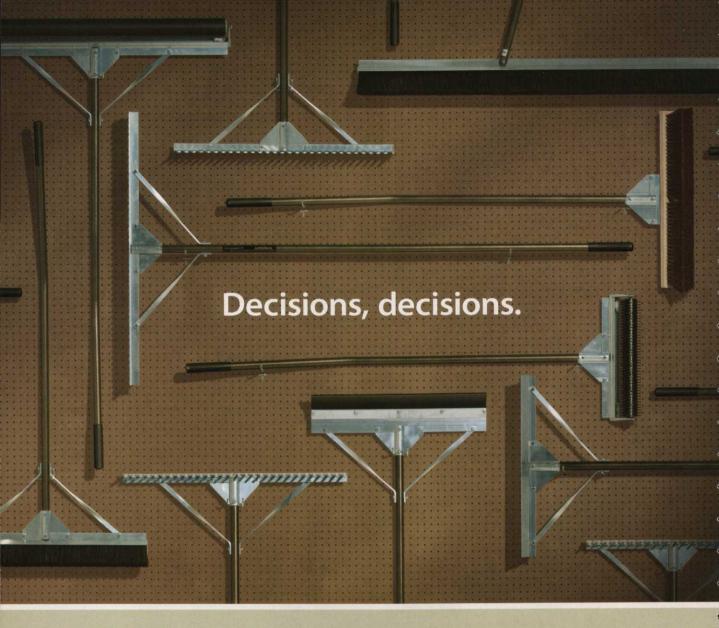


Water. It's what keeps the world alive. As the world's largest manufacturer of irrigation products, we believe it is our responsibility to develop technologies that use water efficiently. Over the past seven decades, our pioneering efforts have resulted in more than 130 patents. From central control systems and automatic shut-off devices to pressure regulating components and low volume drip irrigation, Rain Bird designs products that use water wisely. And our commitment extends beyond products to education, training and services for our industry and our communities.

The need to conserve water has never been greater. We want to do even more, and with your help, we can. Visit www.rainbird.com for more information about

The Intelligent Use of Water.™





The Standard Golf Magnum Tool Line...We can take on any job.



No matter what the job, Standard Golf has the tools you need...Magnum Tools. What separates them from other tools is their tough, high-grade aluminum/ magnesium construction and twist and gusset bracing to eliminate head-to-handle wobble. Magnum Tools may be tough,

but that just makes choosing them even
easier, Ordering is easier, too...call 866-SG-EXPRESS
to talk with a company representative or work with
your local distributor. With so many tools to choose from,
the easy choice is Standard Golf.

For toll-free express service, call 1-866-SG-EXPRESS (1-866-743-9773).

STANDARD GOLF COMPANY

Continued from page 26

because he was tired of environmentalists' accusations in the late 1980s that golf courses were harming the environment. But Davies admits he was subjective in his view as a young superintendent. When he studied the situation objectively, he realized golf wasn't always coming up roses with the environment.

'Golf courses shouldn't be bad for the environment, but they can be," Davies says in his customary matter-of-fact tone. "If golf courses aren't managed properly, they can be harmful to the environment, especially when they are grown in."

Tom Isaak, who founded CourseCo in 1989, holds the same philosophy. And Isaak hired Davies partly because he subscribed to the same environmental ideals.

"It was obvious to Ray that I held environmental values, and it was obvious to me that he found that to be very exciting," Isaak says.

Davies joined the company when CourseCo signed a 20-year lease to manage Crystal Springs. Davies was hired as the club's superintendent and general manager then. He worked hard to achieve the Fully Certified Cooperative Sanctuary designation at Crystal Springs, which it did in 1997, marking the company's first property to attain the status.

At Crystal Springs, Davies directed several projects to upgrade the course from

environmental and playability standpoints. The course's drainage was improved immensely, and water testing was implemented throughout the property. The course's maintained acreage was reduced from 130 acres to 87 acres, which helped create a wildlife corridor that's now a bastion for various beasts, including bobcats, deer and more than 60 bird varieties.

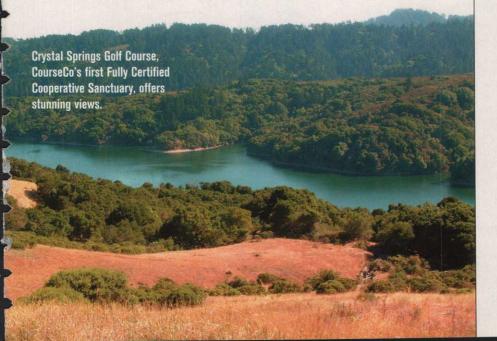
He won't back down

Davies understands why golf courses are a big target of environmentalists' wrath. They comprise many acres, are perceived to use an ocean of water, and are assumed to use dangerous chemicals liberally. Golf's elitist reputation doesn't help matters.

But the environmentalists' indignation doesn't intimidate Davies, who's not one to back down from a challenge. The straightshooting Davies is also secure in his plight. He reveres CourseCo's money-where-yourmouth-is mission statement, which reads: "To lead in environmental management by continuously building knowledge and developing innovative practices."

Pat Gross, a United States Golf Association (USGA) agronomist who has worked with Davies and known him for several years, says CourseCo is a "trailblazing" company. From its outset CourseCo took contract maintenance jobs that other management companies

Continued on page 30



Talk to the factory directly.



the ordering system is easy to use. It's

- Lessley Boyd Carter Plantation Springfield, LA

When SG Express members place their orders, they are immediately processed. In-stock items are shipped within 48 hours, and billing comes through the Standard Golf Distributor of their choice.

Experience our service for yourself.

1-866-SG-EXPRESS

(1-866-743-9773)

www.standardgolf.com



Speaking Naturally

Davies doesn't just want CourseCo to comply with the laws of the land. He wants the company to be an industry leader in environmental management.

Continued from page 29

wouldn't touch because of the properties' environmentally sensitive locations. "CourseCo seized those opportunities," Gross says.

But Davies, who assumed his current position after CourseCo landed its eighth management contract, doesn't just want CourseCo to comply with the laws of the land. He wants the company to be an industry leader in environmental management.

For example, if a permit for a new course construction calls for 25 acres of naturalized areas, Davies will submit a plan for 30 acres. "We want to do better," he stresses.

It's not just about aligning solely with Audubon International, either.

"We don't just jump the Audubon hurdle and say we're done," Davies says. "The Audubon hurdle, in my mind, is quite low."

That said, he says the company has done well in pursuing its goals.

"I don't feel like we've come up short in accomplishing the things we set out to do,"

says Davies, noting that each course under CourseCo's management has its own extensive integrated pest management program and chemical application management plan in place. "But it's a process, and we're never done."

Davies says CourseCo strives to communicate its environmental philosophy to golfers through various means, including signage on courses and distribution of brochures in clubhouses. Davies admits most golfers care more about having positive golf experiences and less about what golf courses do environmentally, but that doesn't mean they don't appreciate the latter. But being an environmental steward is more important to Course-Co's clients, the municipalities and private owners by which the company is employed.

How difficult is it for a golf course to be environmentally proactive in an area of the country known for its stringent environmental requirements? "It's actually easier here because you have to," Davies says. "When you go to

Continued on page 32



