

SERVICE & COUNTING ...



Larry is the guy you meet and it feels like you have known him all your life. He is a gifted writer that always gets his point across, while remaining politically correct – I think that is indicative of his personality!

He always sounds mellow but **there definitely is a fire in the furnace!** I am honored to have him as a friend!

MATT SHAFFER DIRECTOR OF GOLF COURSE OPERATIONS, MERION GOLF CLUB



JOHN ZIMMERS GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT, OAKMONT COUNTRY CLUB

Meeting Larry Aylward all came about after we survived Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005. We had no food, water, electricity, mail – or *Golfdom* magazine – for several months. Operating on laptop batteries and dial-up Internet, I read a *Golfdom* online excerpt from Larry about our Association canceling the GIS show in New Orleans, so I emailed Larry a note stating, “Maybe one day again ...” Larry replied, “There’s a golf superintendent alive and still in New Orleans? I have to talk to you!” Larry came down that December and **became part of our New Orleans family** of friends by writing our story and giving us hope.

Thanks Larry, and congratulations on all Honors!

PETER CAREW GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT, CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

There is no person in this industry more respected than Larry is. **He connects with the readers like no one I have ever seen.** It doesn’t make any difference what you do in the turfgrass industry, or how successful you are, Larry is always going to treat you the same.

CHRIS GRAY GENERAL MANAGER
MARVEL GOLF CLUB

Congratulations on 10 great years at *Golfdom*! When anyone thinks of *Golfdom*, they immediately think of Larry Aylward. Thanks for your continued dedication and the interest you have taken in our wonderful turf profession. **You and the magazine are certainly an industry staple.** I would like to thank you and commend you on the tremendous articles you have provided for our industry. I admire the interest you have taken in all aspects of the business.



Larry Aylward is a walking bear-hug of humility, humor and hard work. His passion for sharing information in our industry is only surpassed by his diligence in delivering it. His warmth is genuine and his friendship is priceless. **Thanks Larry, for all you do for all of us.**

JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FLORIDA GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION



Larry is one of those rare journalists who treats his subject matter and its people with an equal degree of care and compassion. **Golf and golf course maintenance are just darned lucky he chose to write about them** instead of world affairs. He’s good enough to be doing the latter.

TRENT BOUTS EDITOR
CAROLINAS GREEN, CAROLINAS GCSA

In an industry known for its passion and tradition, **Larry’s passion stands out from the crowd** and he has become, in effect, part of the tradition for those of us who share in his zeal for the game and business of golf.

BOB VANDENBOOM
SR. MARKETING MANAGER – GOLF
THE TORO COMPANY



GCSAA appreciates the growing media exposure that has helped elevate the association and its members among a variety of audiences. Certainly Larry Aylward has been a key contributor to that cause. **We salute his dedication and professionalism** in his coverage of the golf course management industry.

MARK J. WOODWARD GCSAA, CEO



People of the Year

BY LARRY AYLWARD,
EDITOR IN CHIEF

This year's
honorees
have no
shortage of
integrity and
character

It's time to pass out the awards for *Golfdom's* People of the Year. May I say, we have some solid individuals as honorees — people who are hard workers and humble servants. Thank goodness these people have embraced the golf course maintenance industry. Without them, our small world would be greatly diminished.

As in past years, *Golfdom's* People of the Year are recognized for actions that reflect integrity and character. So let's get to it. Please hold your applause until all awards have been presented.

Congratulations to this year's well-deserving honorees!



ILLUSTRATION BY: STOCK INTERNATIONAL, INC.



The “Unpretentious As They Come” Award

TERRY BONAR CERTIFIED GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT, CANTERBURY GOLF CLUB

Ben Franklin once said, “Humility makes great men twice honorable.” Franklin’s words could easily be directed at Terry Bonar, the longtime certified superintendent of Canterbury Golf Club in Cleveland, who’s retiring from the club this month after 49 years. I’m sure Bonar has some great stories about his wonderful work at Canterbury, including overseeing a plethora of PGA tournaments, but he prefers to keep such highlights close to his vest.

Earlier this year, Bonar told me of the many times he’d gaze at the course while driving out of the parking lot at the end of a day’s work and say to himself proudly, “Man, the course looks good!” But so often, Bonar says he learned that such pride can be short-lived. “I’d come back the next morning and say, ‘What happened here?’”

Bonar will tell you that Canterbury, which opened in 1922, is a historic club and that he was just passing through its illustrious annals. But Bonar has been part of those annals for nearly half a century.

Just as Franklin has a great quote about humility, so does Bonar, who lived by this statement as a reminder to keep his pride in check while managing the turfgrass at Canterbury.

“There’s a thin line between a hero and a goat,” Bonar said.

He’s right, but Bonar earns the hero moniker in our book. ■

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People of the Year

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The “Money Where Your Mouth Is” Award

JOE MCCLEARY CERTIFIED GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT, SADDLE ROCK GOLF COURSE

Joe McCleary will be the first to tell you superintendents need to educate nongolfers about environmental stewardship on golf courses. And then McCleary, certified superintendent of Saddle Rock Golf Course in Aurora, Colo., will be the first to go out and find some nongolfers to educate.

All of us can talk a good game, but many of us don't translate that talk to action. McCleary does. He has gone on the offensive to promote golf courses as a friend, not a foe, of the environment. Last summer, I went with McCleary while he gave a tour of his course to a guy named Mike from the Denver Botanic Gardens — and



someone definitely worth educating. McCleary invited Mike, who was not fond of golf courses and their role in the environment, to see the wildflowers and native vegetation in the out-of-play areas at Saddle Rock.

It wasn't the first time McCleary conducted the tour for a person down on golf. He drove Mike in his golf car, making stops along the 18-hole course to explore the flora and fauna. Early in the tour, Mike confessed that “golf courses make him shiver.” After the tour, I asked Mike if his negative perceptions had changed. “They have for this golf course,” he said.

Thanks to McCleary. ■

The “Giving Back” Award

TODD VOSS SUPERINTENDENT, DOUBLE EAGLE CLUB

At the time, they were the hottest college football game tickets around. If anybody had a ticket to the Ohio State-USC game in Columbus, Ohio, last September, you were going to one of the most anticipated games of the year.

Todd Voss, superintendent of the Double Eagle Club in Galena, Ohio, had two tickets. He received them from the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF) as a gift for the time he has spent on the organization's board of directors. Voss is



OTF's past president and donated much of his time to help the organization succeed and grow.

“Todd could've taken those tickets and gone to the game,” says Kevin Thompson,

OTF's executive director. “He could've sold them and walked away with \$1,000. They were his tickets to do whatever he wanted to do with them.”

Voss ended up raffling off the tickets, clearing hundreds of dollars. He donated the proceeds to OTF for turfgrass research. Talk about giving back to the profession. Not only that, Voss recognized that turfgrass research entities need all the money they can get these days because of declines in funding.

Voss sold his raffle tickets during a field day event in August at The Ohio State University. He sat at an outdoor table and peddled the raffle tickets like he was selling hot dogs at a ball game.

But Voss gave no inkling the tickets belonged to him. It wasn't his nature to get people to think it was cool of him to donate the tickets to raise money for turfgrass research. He just wanted to raise money for turfgrass research, his livelihood.

But we think it was very cool of Voss to do so. ■

The “Seed Bag Is Half Full” Award

BILL ROSE PRESIDENT, TEE-2-GREEN

It has been one tough year in the golf course seed business. With course construction at a standstill and renovation projects on hold because of the sour economy, seed growers and distributors have had to find ways to survive. It's easy for them to look at a partially used bag of seed and view it as half empty rather than half full.

But not Bill Rose. When *Golfdom* spoke with Rose last summer about the state of the seed industry, he was surprisingly upbeat. Rose prefers to dwell on when things get better, not on how they're bad.

“I'm always optimistic, and I'm generally right,” he says. “I think it will get going again in 2011.”

Rose, who has been involved with the seed business since 1951, says he has been studying it, and that drops in his business normally don't last long. Rose estimates his business is down 30 percent compared to 2007.

But rather than focus on how much business he has lost, Rose says he's focusing on business he could gain through other endeavors like interseeding.

“The key in the United States is interseeding,” Rose says. “We have to fix up the courses we have. The ones that are in good shape are the ones that will do well.”

The golf course industry — and the world, for that matter — needs a few optimists to get us through the economic doom and gloom. We salute Rose for doing just that. ■



The “Helping Hand” Award

TIM GRAVERT SUPERINTENDENT,
BETHPAGE BLACK GOLF COURSE

When Tim Gravert heard about Matt Henkel's plight, he wanted to do whatever he could to help him. Gravert wanted to make Henkel's day. He ended up making Henkel's week.

In 2008, Henkel, the assistant golf course superintendent at PrairieView Golf Club in Byron, Ill., watched the U.S. Open on TV from a hospital bed while undergoing presurgical tests to have a brain tumor removed. This past June, Henkel not only watched the U.S. Open live from Bethpage Black Golf Course, he worked on the grounds crew as a volunteer — thanks to an exclusive invite from Gravert, superintendent of the Black Course.

The 30-year-old Henkel was devastated when he was diagnosed with the brain tumor. But Henkel had a tre-

mendous support network, including people he didn't even know, like Gravert, who grew up in a town not far from Henkel's hometown.

“One of my buddies from back home met Matt through a guy he worked with,” Gravert says. “He told me about what Matt was going through.”

Gravert's buddy also told him about a benefit, featuring a silent auction, to raise money to help Henkel pay his medical bills. Gravert worked his United States Golf Association connections and came up with two tickets to the U.S. Open to be auctioned at the benefit.

“When Matt found out about that, he wanted to get in touch with me,” Gravert says. “We talked, and I asked him if he wanted to come out and volunteer for



Tim Gravert (left) helped make Matt Henkel's week.

the tournament.”

In June 2008, when he watched the U.S. Open from a hospital bed, Henkel never dreamed he'd be at the tournament a year later — and in the middle of the action, at that. Back then, Henkel just wanted to be alive come June 2009. But there he was at Bethpage, busting his tail for a week on little sleep and loving every minute of it.

“It was nice to help make a dream come true for him after he had been through something like that,” the 28-year-old Gravert says. “If there's ever anything I can do to help somebody out who has gone through something like that, I will do it.”

May a golf course-size of good karma come to Gravert. ■

The “Wonderful Work Ethic” Award

**KWAME KANKAM, NANA AMANKWAH,
SLAVIC GRECU AND IGOR TURCAN**
MAINTENANCE CREW MEMBERS, VINEYARD GOLF CLUB

At the Vineyard Golf Club on Martha's Vineyard, golf course superintendent Jeff Carlson can't use any pesticides to treat turfgrass disease, control insects or eradicate weeds. Carlson, with the help of several organic products and intense cultural practices, has succeeded in keeping turf disease and insects at bay. But weeds are another story.

Dandelions, crabgrass and other broadleaf weeds are

Carlson's toughest challenge, but there are no reliable herbicides to kill them. Carlson's best tool to control weeds is the four-member crew he employs to remove them manually. The team members — Kwame Kankam, Nana Amankwah, Slavic Grecu and Igor Turcan — work together in sections with large, fork-like tools in hands. They remove the weeds from the turf with precision and fill the barren areas with a soil and seed mix. They perform the task 40 to 50 hours a week during the golfing season. Kankam and Amankwah are from Ghana, and Grecu and Turcan are from the Republic of Mondova.

“The hard part about weeding is there's so little progress,” Carlson says. “It takes such a long time. It can become discouraging.”

That's why Carlson is so impressed with his crew, which he calls his “pre-emergent.” They go out and do the same tedious job every day and never complain. Carlson is wowed by their collective work ethic.

“It's a really important project they do,” Carlson says. “They play an important role.” ■



Nana Amankwah, Slavic Grecu, Kwame Kankam and Igor Turcan

Continued on page 27



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People of the Year

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The “Superhero” Award

DOUG HIGGINS AND BRUCE NELSON SUPERINTENDENTS
REGATTA BAY GOLF CLUB AND FOX HOLLOW AT LAKEWOOD GOLF COURSE

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's super-superintendents!

The incredible stories of superintendents Doug Higgins, 48, and Bruce Nelson, 57, are those of comic-book superheroes.

Last April, Higgins, superintendent of Regatta Bay Golf Club in Destin, Fla., was making his morning rounds on the course when, while on the 16th hole, he heard tires squealing. Then Higgins saw a car sinking in one of his golf course's ponds. He called 911, took off his shoes and jumped in the pond to rescue a woman whose car was almost entirely submerged in the water.

Higgins swam to the car, which was in water over his head. He couldn't get the front door of the car open because it was submerged in water. He was able to get the back door open and pulled the woman to safety. The woman probably would've drowned if it weren't for Higgins because the fire department wouldn't have arrived in

time to save her.

“Your instincts take over in a situation like that,” Higgins says. “I wasn't scared. My adrenaline definitely took over.”

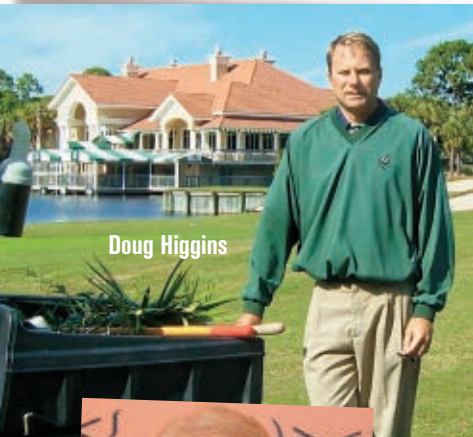
In January, Nelson, the certified superintendent at Fox Hollow at Lakewood (Colo.), was quietly fishing the South Platte River with his buddy when a woman yelling for help startled them. The woman had just watched someone slip on an icy bank of

the river. After about 20 minutes, Nelson found the man, who was badly injured. The man was also pinned between the sloping ice and a boulder.

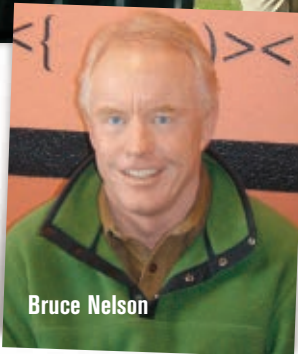
After Nelson risked life and limb to get to him, he and his buddy stabilized him, built a fire and waited until after nightfall when a search-and-rescue unit arrived to take the man away. The man, who suffered a broken left arm, a fractured pelvis, a fractured left hip and a punctured lung, has since recovered, and he and Nelson have kept in contact.

“He's really grateful,” Nelson says. “For me, it was really, really rewarding.”

Here's to Higgins and Nelson — they aren't only heroes, but also are super superintendents. ■



Doug Higgins



Bruce Nelson

Editor's note: Contributing editors Geoff Shackelford and Anthony Pioppi also contributed to this report. For previous honorees of *Golfdom's People of the Year*, visit www.golfdom.com and type “people of the year” in the search command.



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LEADERS	HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	RD	RD	RD	RD
	PAR	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	1	2	3	4	
PARR																							
WOODS																							
SINGH V																							
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EDFORS																							
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BREHAUT																							

2009: SHACK'S LOOK BACK

Golf Course Maintenance – Front and Center

It's hard to imagine a year when the world hasn't heard more about superintendents, the efficiency of modern irrigation and the potential for a green revolution

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

The state of golf is typically reflected by its major events. Even as 2008 ended with a little stock market collapse and the ensuing economic meltdown, golf held its head high after a combination of Tiger Woods' unforgettable win at Torrey Pines, two dynamic Padraig Harrington Major victories and then was gift-wrapped with an epic American Ryder Cup triumph.

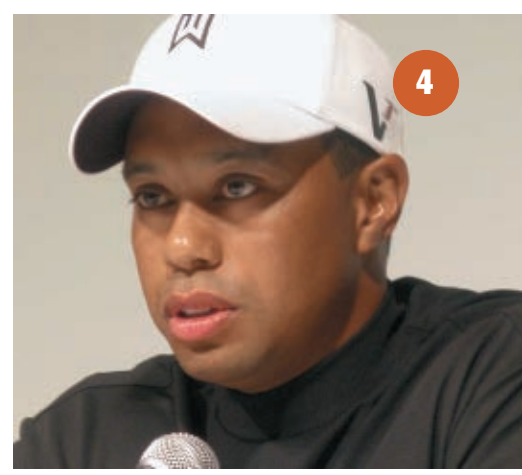
What about 2009? Well, have you ever received a used gift card as a present?

The enigmatic Angel Cabrera won on a Masters Sunday when Tiger and Phil Mickelson were finally paired to-

gether. An even more enigmatic Lucas Glover finished off his rain-plagued U.S. Open win on a Monday at a Bethpage State Park miraculously held together by Craig Currier, his crew and army of volunteer saints. Then, just when it looked like order would be restored with a historic Tom Watson win at the Open Championship, the 59-year old legend bogeyed the final hole and stumbled in a playoff loss to Stewart Cink. For good measure, someone named Y.E. Yang dramatically took the PGA Championship from Tiger Woods, who went Majorless for the first time since 2003.

Oh, and not since the Great Depression has golf seen anything like what else

PHOTOS (ABOVE, RIGHT) BY: GEOFF SHACKELFORD



it witnessed in 2009: high-profile course closings with more on the way, a moribund new-course construction industry that has essentially shut down stateside, widespread layoffs in all sectors, the demise of the second-tier country club, massive hits to golf's image and no end in sight to concerns about the game's future.

One ray of hope remained — the golf course maintenance industry and its ability to adapt in the face of serious questions about the future of water, green and sustainability. It's hard to imagine a year when the world has heard more about the role of the superintendent, the efficiency of modern irrigation systems and the potential for a green revolution.

Front-page news

Most striking was a front-page *New York Times* article by Leslie Kaufman extolling golf's "contributions to helping better understand water management," specifically in Georgia, where "golf course managers have emerged as go-to gurus on water conservation for both industries and nonprofit groups."

The August story also noted that, "Water is just one area where golf courses

and environmentalists may find a rapprochement," reminding readers that "as metropolitan areas sprawl outward, golf courses may be the only large-scale green space for miles around, offering crucial potential habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife."

That was not breaking news to anyone in the golf industry, but when such statements appear in a front-page *New York Times* story and are syndicated in papers throughout the land and widely read online, the development can easily be viewed as a breakthrough moment when golf courses face more environmental scrutiny than ever.

In May, *New York Times* golf correspondent Larry Dorman looked at three companies "competing in the market for subterranean wireless sensors." The story was accompanied by superlative graphics showing how the monitoring of moisture, temperature and salinity in soil can be fed to a software network accessed remotely on a laptop, a handheld device or a desktop computer.

It was another victory for golf's place as a leader in technology and innovation when Dorman concluded: "Early adopters say they will cut an average of 10 percent of their typical water use, amounting to millions of gallons of water each year. At that rate, the system would pay for itself within the first year, depending on the volume of water a course uses."

More positive ink arrived in September, when NBC aired the story of Sherwood Golf Course manager Brian Lautenschlager and superintendent Mark English, who have brought 11 llamas to the Brevard, N.C., country club to work as caddies.

"They go at the speed of a golf car," Lautenschlager told the NBC reporter for a feature that appeared on the network nightly news.

Also in September, Merion Golf Club superintendent Matt Shaffer used attention brought on by the Walker Cup to not sugarcoat the state of main-

tenance and golfers' odd expectations.

"Merion is an old-fashioned golf course in a modern world," Shaffer told the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. "Television has changed everything. Appearances are all that matter. At Merion, we are less sensitive to matters of aesthetics and more interested in playability. Other courses use much more chemicals and fertilizer than we do, but if more golfers were less concerned about brown grass, golf would be a lot cheaper for everyone."

November witnessed *Golf Digest* focusing on golf and the environment by featuring a spread of top superintendents talking about their roles. Besides including photos of each (and no one looked like Carl Spackler), readers could go to *Golf Digest's* Web site and hear extended audio clips that revealed how articulate and provocative some of the nation's top superintendents can be if given the chance.

Hope?

Amid all of the gloom and doom in our economy, there seemed to include an almost weekly black eye for the game. For

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- 1** Rain swamped Bethpage Black, but Craig Currier and his staff prevailed.
- 2** Lucas Glover also prevailed at Bethpage with a win.
- 3** Matt Shaffer spoke his mind.
- 4** Tiger Woods went Majorless, but still won a ton.

PHOTOS BY: HOWARD P. NUENBERGER (RIGHT, TOP); LARRY AYLWARD

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instance, Congress held hearings on banks that received government bailout funds and the hospitality industry took huge hits after Northern Trust Bank was exposed for hosting opulent celebrations during the PGA Tour event it sponsored.

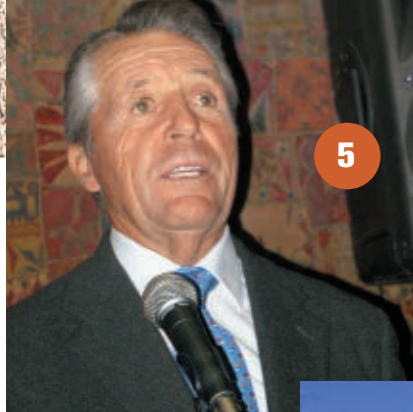
Yet for all of the embarrassing moments, President Barack Obama teed it up 24 times in his first year in office. Not since new Golf Hall of Fame inductee Dwight Eisenhower has an American president so devoted his leisure time to the game. Yet, that didn't stop a number of golfers from complaining that the hard-working president should stay off the links.

As for golf's executive ranks, there was little hesitation to pat themselves on the back after uniting to get golf back into the Olympics. With backing from every noted player (all conspicuously happen to have golf course design businesses), the movement has been billed as a savior for the game and course construction industry. The thinking goes like this: When tennis became an Olympic sport, governments in Russia and elsewhere suddenly invested in the development of tennis academies and the world became a happier place because we were introduced to the likes of Maria Sharapova.

The less-than-subtle inference is the sport will grow magically worldwide, thanks to new Olympic funding in countries that don't have golf. With almost no golf courses under construction in the United States, architects and builders view the opportunity to work overseas as a godsend.

The year a connection was made

In reaction to the Olympic news and realizations the golf industry will remain stagnant until a new model emerges based on fun, faster rounds and environmental sustainability. Several noted figures began to speak out about the role technology plays in boxing golf into a corner of 7,500-yard courses that take too long to play. All-time great and architect Gary Player said: "We have



to build golf courses for the people. We have to change. Change is the price of survival. We cannot go on in the golf business as we are now. We have to get more people playing, more people out, more children playing, and we've got to change our whole concept."

Tony Jacklin, a counterpart from Player's era and an always-shrewd observer of the sport, remarked to *Golf World UK* that the state of golf "is a bit like the financial mess the world is in."

"For too long, no one wanted to address the underlying problems in the world economy but then all of a sudden it was too late. No one wants to believe the game today is not as good as it was. Tiger disguises a lot of the problems."

Jacklin, like many, believes the problems started with the chase for distance that led to absurdly long new courses, and a devaluing of much-needed short courses. "It will take strong leadership but men like that are few and far between," he said.

Just as striking was a David Owen-authored story in the November *Golf Digest*. A noted *New Yorker* staff writer and author of Augusta National's club history, Owen used pages once devoid of any suggestion to say the distance chase was bad for the game.

"Many exciting technological advances related to conservation and golf-course maintenance are being developed," he wrote. "But technological innovation alone can't solve all of golf's environmental and economic chal-



5 Gary Player said "change is the price of survival." 6 Golf course closings were the result of a downturn in the economy.

lenges, and even the most promising-seeming discoveries have a history of carrying unintended consequences and hidden costs. Golf's governing bodies have dithered on the distance question since the early 1990s, but that attitude seems increasingly unsustainable. We can take the initiative in shrinking golf's landscape, or we can allow economic crises and environmental disasters to shrink it for us."

In 2010, we'll see the first effort to rein in distance with the introduction of new groove rules that some believe will force better golfers to use softer golf balls that don't fly as far, and therefore end the race to lengthen courses. While the rule is a nice a start, the golf industry realized in 2009 that the game's recent direction has put the sport in a bind and a contraction of some facilities and the model for golf is inevitable. More importantly, serious introspection and much-needed discussion has begun in earnest.

Here's to 2010 becoming the year golf figures out how to create a sustainable future. ■

Shackelford, Golfdom's contributing editor, can be reached at geoffshac@me.com.