

GCSAA Modifies Alternative Spikes Position

Citing a golf industry void of a complete and comprehensive database of information on alternative footwear options to metal spikes, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) board of directors modified its position on the issue.

The action was taken Feb. 3, in a board meeting prior to the start of GCSAA's 68th International Golf Course Conference and Show (Feb. 6-12) at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Previously, the GCSAA "alternative spikes" position recommended individual courses adopt a policy that best served their respective operations. However, a GCSAA ad hoc committee comprised of Immediate Past President Gary Grigg, CGCS at Royal Poinciana Golf Club, Naples, Fla., and directors Dave Fearis, CGCS at Blue Hills Country Club, Kansas City, Mo., and Tommy Witt, CGCS at Wynstone Golf Club, North Barrington, Ill., late last year began to examine a position on alternative spikes based on scientific/agronomic data.

Upon review of that information, the committee believed the GCSAA's policy should emphasize its role in accumulating and disseminating relevant and useful information to the golf industry to assist in the decision-making process. GCSAA has already begun to collect data from shoe manufacturers, scientific/agronomic research, perception surveys from various organizations and policies of allied golf associations.

"There is an obvious trend towards a conversion from metal to alternative spikes," GCSAA President Bruce R. Williams, CGCS, said. "However, we owe the membership a policy decision that is based on complete and accurate information. Our new policy is four-fold: 1. Present complete, relevant and useful information; 2. Suggest that individual courses use the input of the golf course superintendent in establishing a policy; 3. Reaffirm that GCSAA will remain attuned to the issue by identifying and encouraging continued research and 4. Encourage golf facilities to examine the merits of using GCSAA resources to examine their current position."

Work has also begun on a white paper that will provide background information regarding the use of alternative spikes. This document will examine agronomic issues (plant health, aesthetics, soil) and golfer issues (slippage, comfort, putting quality), current trends in the industry (course conversion rate, professional tour player opinions, allied association policy, legal precedence) and GCSAA's strategy in assisting facility decisions and educating/informing influential golfers/employers.

Two white papers will be presented to the board for additional action this spring. It is anticipated that complete/comprehensive information packets will be available for distribution June 1.

GCSAA Position Statement Regarding The Use Of Alternative Footwear Options to Metal Spikes

The GCSAA recognizes there is considerable information establishing the benefits of alternatives to metal spikes. It is GCSAA's position that facilities should consider requiring the use of these alternatives. GCSAA recognizes that many factors affect the decision to mandate alternatives to metal spikes. These factors may include any or all of the following:

- Design of the golf course
- Quality expectations of golfers
- Turfgrass species and varieties used on the golf course
- Amount of foot traffic on the golf course
- Perception of golfers
- Region of the country
- Climate
- Maintenance levels and budgets
- Level of ability of golfers
- Liability or legal issues

While it is the responsibility of each golf course to determine what policy is best for its facility, GCSAA is committed to facilitating the development of these policies through the accumulation and dissemination of information. As a result, it is in the best interest of facilities to consult with the golf course superintendent before making a decision. GCSAA will serve as a comprehensive source of information in the following areas:

- Agronomic questions
- Legal questions
- Golfers' perceptions
- Impacts on pliability
- Financial impacts
- Golf course aesthetics
- Anecdotal information

Where valid information exists in these areas, GCSAA will collect and make it available through its various resources to its members and the industry. Where information does not exist in a particular area, GCSAA will identify and encourage research to obtain this information.