

# Golf Course Architects Look For Help To Defend Courses Against Technology

By PAUL FULLMER

*American Society of Golf Course Architects*

Golf course architects believe there should be "a line drawn in the sand soon" -at least for tournament golf - or technology could render some courses obsolete.

The Board of Governors of the American society of Golf Course Architects stated that " it is difficult and sometimes impossible because of land restrictions for architects to design courses that will challenge top players using high-tech golf clubs and balls. The challenge will grow even more difficult with each passing year.

"It is not just an issue for new courses, but for every club that finds its best golf holes rendered defenseless by technology."

As modern golf becomes more of a power game, designers are finding it difficult to create holes that require good players to hit long irons onto the green. In the recent U.S. Open, for instance, players were hitting with two irons on a 490-yard hole - not the driver and long iron intended.

In 1994, the ASGCA issued its original warning on the subject. At that time the Society distributed a White Paper that pointed out that advancements in golf course maintenance, club design and ball technology have altered the way the game is played and how courses are designed.

## Some Restrictions Needed

Many of the group's most prominent members, including Jack Nicklaus (who received the group's Donald Ross Award during the recent annual meeting in Columbus) and Pete Dye, have long called for a "tournament ball" that would control distance. Many ASGCA past presidents - including Bobby and Rees Jones, Ed Seay, Art Hills and Geoffery Cornish - support the call to review technology's impact on the game.

"Technological parameters would enable some of the great traditional courses to continue to host major tournaments," Newly elected ASGCA President Damian Pascuzzo said, " and enable us to design new courses that won't be obsolete in a few years."

Longer drives by high handicap players also are forcing

designers to widen corridors to accommodate more pronounced slice and hook shots. "Safety is a real concern," said Pascuzzo.

Pascuzzo added that if technology dictates longer and wider golf courses, it would further escalate land acquisition and maintenance costs.

## Longer Courses Discourage Newcomers

"If technology continues to give more distance, it will be impossible for us to design courses that will be a challenge for more than a decade. We're already designing 7,000-yard courses. What's next - 8,000 or 9,000 yards? Or does technology force designers to 'trick up' a course in order to defend par? Frankly, we think that solution is not good for golf," explained Pascuzzo.

The new ASGCSA president stressed the fact that golf needs to attract more new players who find the game fun. Research shows that many players drop out because they become discouraged, and Pascuzzo believes that percentage would increase if courses had to be longer and more difficult to challenge better players.

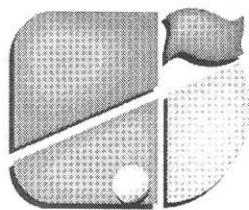
"It's becoming increasingly difficult to design a courses that all levels of players find interesting," he added. "Many newer courses have five and six sets of tees and even that might not be enough to satisfy all the needs."

## Urges More Cooperation for "Good of the Game"

The ASGCSA Board of Governors urges golf's ruling bodies and manufacturers to work more cooperatively so that the game of golf can continue to prosper.

"We don't think it's a good idea to have different classes of golf courses - just a handful for the touring pros, certain others that only excellent players can master and then those for the everyday players. Reasonable parameters for clubs and balls will help the great golf courses of America stand up and defend par, as their original designers intended, and that will benefit everyone who enjoys watching great players go up against the best in strategic design."

The American Society of Golf Course Architects is composed of 150 leading golf course architects throughout North America, all of whom have met the organization's stringent requirements for membership. To learn more about the ASGCA, visit the group's web site at [www.asgca.org](http://www.asgca.org). Or contact the ASGCA by phone (312) 372-7090 or fax (312) 372-6160.



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