

given day. Those estimates range as high as 18 percent more players completing play per day because of the shortened playing time. Britannia's membership will be limited to condo owners, hotel guests and a few limited open memberships.

Interest in the short course concept, according to Gene Bates vice president of Golforce, Nicklaus' design operation, has been steady.

"We've had about 50 inquiries from Portland to Chicago (since Britannia opened)," he says. □

MacGregor Golf Company, Golden Bear Enterprises, golf course architects and others interested in the concept. A slate of officers was elected and three short course tournaments planned to introduce the game to the public. The first of these tournaments was held earlier this month at the Oceans golf course in Daytona Beach Shores which was a Par 3 modified to accommodate the Cayman game, with another scheduled for May 18 and the last on June 8. They will all be held in Florida.

"These tournaments, as well as introducing the game to the public, will also help us as an association, learn about the peculiarities of the game," says Amick.

Amick admits there are diehard golf purists who will never play the Cayman game.

"There will be a percentage that plays both and there will be some who will be happy to play the Cayman game exclusively because it's less intimidating."

Amick sees countless applications of the short game to Par 3 courses as well as municipal and school applications. He, personally, has had inquiries about the short course from all over the U.S. and even one from France.

"We're looking at long-term acceptance here," Amick says. "It will take awhile for people to 'find' the short game."

"It's very gratifying to me that Bill Diddel talked of this concept enthusiastically more than 30 years ago, and that it's happening today." □

# The Cayman Controversy: The Emperor's New Clothes?

by Dr. Michael Hurdzan, president, American Society of Golf Course Architects

Let's put Cayman golf into perspective.

Is it a great idea, or just a passing novelty? As a golf course architect, I have some strong personal thoughts on the subject.

Before expressing my views, I would like to clearly state that the American Society of Golf Course Architects has no formal opinion on this concept, but it does strongly support any idea that helps this great game grow and flourish. An opinion poll of our members would be expected to vary as widely as one taken of any other golf-related professional organization on whether it is a good or bad idea.

Putting things into perspective means looking at historical facts and present developments, then evaluating the relative value of an idea within the context of current society. The relative worth of an idea can only be arrived at by examining what the idea "is" and "is not" and the proper weighting of its positive and negative aspects.

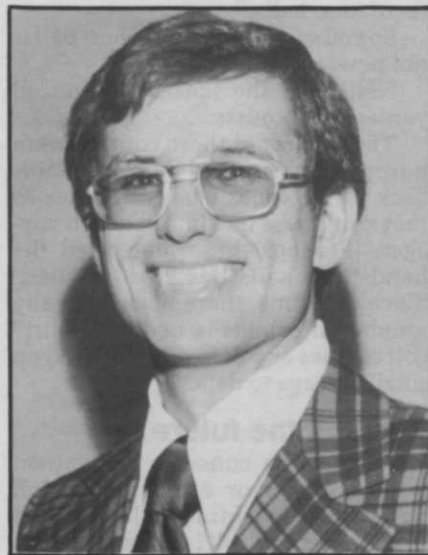
Let's begin by examining what this "short ball" concept "is" and "is not." The concept of:

- a reduced distance ball is not new.
- a reduced yardage golf course is not new.
- short ball golf is probably not the wave of the future.
- Cayman golf is not golf under USGA rules.
- short ball golf may not be economically viable.

However, the concept:

- is good for golf because of the interest and publicity it has generated.
- is a good teaching tool.
- is an alternative to golf much like a form of miniature golf.
- is, in my opinion, a great publicity gimmick for Grand Cayman Island, home of Britannia, Jack Nicklaus'

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Dr. Michael Hurdzan

short course.

Now, I will try to substantiate these facts and observations.

As I said earlier, the idea of a reduced distance golf ball is not new and originated when golf was still played with gutta percha golf balls. A small item in the Nov. 6, 1891 issue of Britain's *Golf* suggested using "hand-fives" balls that "... do not carry so far, while at the same time ... let you know when you made a clean drive. This is important for those whose space is limited, and it also enables the learner to do more driving with less walking."

A quick check of golf ball patents identified many patents for a "short" ball with the oldest being issued to a Francis Atkinson (Patent No. 456,920) of New York City in 1891; almost 100 years ago.

Some of the more notable patents since then have included balls made of sponge rubber (1922), yarn coverings (1929), and cork (1920). Of particular interest to me was Patent No. 2,364,955 issued in 1944 to the golf course architect William Diddel. Diddel, recently deceased, had earned a



national reputation, among other things, for shooting his age more than 1,000 times. He described how his invention could reduce the acreage for a golf course down to 15 acres. His golf ball design used butyl rubber with a filling of magnesium oxide and the ball was claimed to have the "feel of a conventional ball."

Then Joseph Gentiluomo of Schenectady, NY, who was awarded Patent No. 3,940,145 in 1976, for a "restricted trajectory golf ball ... having a flight range of approximately one-half to one-quarter the range of regulation balls."

So you see, the idea of a short ball is not new.

Neither is the idea of a reduced yardage golf course.

The earliest of these courses were purportedly designed by sea captains back in the 1800s near port cities so they could pass the time between voyages. (Perhaps these men used the hand-fives balls described earlier.) Since that time, there have been any number of patents issued for "short" golf courses or golf facilities placed on small acreage to date.

### Wave of the future?

None of these concepts has gained wide support or attention which brings me to my third "not" point; and that is short ball golf is not the wave of the future.

The reason for believing that reduced distance golf balls and limited acreage golf courses are isolated novelties is purely historical and intuitive. If these ideas have been around for nearly a century and have not caught on, why should they now?

We have always had limited space for golf in highly populated areas, and with our modern high speed transportation, open spaces are only minutes away. Besides, we are also beginning to develop more previously unused land for golf courses, such as flood plains, landfills, airport clear

Through the years, the golf ball has undergone many and dramatic changes. In the 1890's Game of Five balls or Hand Fives balls were used, covered in leather. In 1902, the

bramble-pattern Haskell ball with gutta percha covers became popular.

Wilson introduced the Pro Staff in the 1980's with truncated dimples for better resistance to wind. In 1984, the Cayman ball was introduced by the MacGregor Golf Company, weighing half the weight of a traditional ball and designed to go half the distance.

zones and dedicated green space closer to population centers.

My fourth point about Cayman golf not being golf under USGA rules stems purely from the yardages used to set par for golf courses. According to the USGA, those yardages are as follows:

PAR	MEN	WOMEN
3	up to 250	up to 210
4	251-470	211-400
5	471 and up	401-575
6	—	576 and up

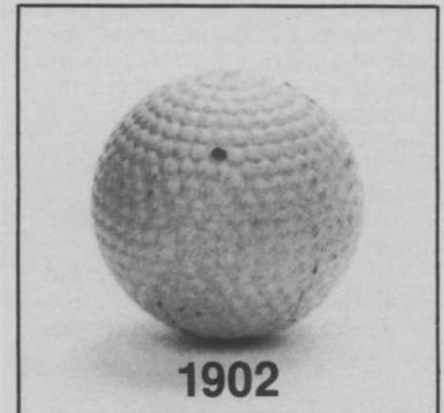
The rules of golf don't specify what kind of ball these yardages apply to so one must assume it applies to all golf balls, including the short ball. According to USGA rules, all of the

Grand Cayman holes are Par 3s. It is not likely that the USGA will write new yardage rules for every new golf ball, therefore, say what you will, the Grand Cayman course is only a Par 3 course.

If we carry this logic a step further on the golf ball being able to reduce the acreage needed for golf courses, then the no hook or slice Polara golf ball may be an equal boon to golf. After all, area is a function of length and width; the short ball reduces length and the straight ball reduces width.

My last point in the "not" column deals with the possibility that the short ball course may not be economically viable.

As a dedicated golf traditionalist, I



have strongly denounced the golf cart except for use by medically or physically impaired golfers, or in areas of extreme heat or slopes. The only argument that I get from golf cart supporters is "yes, you are right, but without them, we could not financially survive."

I can't believe anyone would take a cart to play short ball golf, so that represents a substantial loss of income to the course.

Secondly, Jack Nicklaus, designer of Britannia, the first "short" course to be built, was quoted in the June 1984 issue of *Golf Digest* magazine as saying, "A 150-acre municipal course that would normally handle 200 people in one day could handle up to 1,600

if it were designed for the short ball." His next sentence is, "the green maintenance would be less because the ball is lighter."

Now, think about that. First, the time to play golf is not a function of the cart ride between shots, it is the time

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**After all, area is a function of length and width; the short ball reduces length and the straight ball reduces width.**

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that the golfer takes to find his ball, cuss, and pound his club on the ground, and then replace his divot. And since on short ball courses people are walking anyway and putting will be the same, how do you save any time? You will still be loading the golf course on seven minute intervals and I believe the playing time on a completely filled, short ball golf course will be closer to four hours than to the touted 2.5.

And even if you could put 500-600 people per day through a course, can you imagine what problems of spike marks and compaction you would have? Less green maintenance—not likely. What about the cost to maintain tees and bunkers? Actually the only reduction in maintenance is in fairways and roughs and then all we are doing is concentrating the divots into smaller spaces.

The parking lot to hold the cars that people come in would probably be nine or 10 acres in size.

### Good for golf

Well, if this is what short ball is *not*, then what is it?

First, I believe it is good for golf for it has generated lots of interest and discussion about golf in non-golf publications. This extra exposure is sure to help the game. People may be tempted to try the sport simply because it is a current topic of discussion at the office, cocktail party or social gathering. There is a certain lure to try the short ball alternative to golf for no other reason than curiosity or to become the local resident expert.

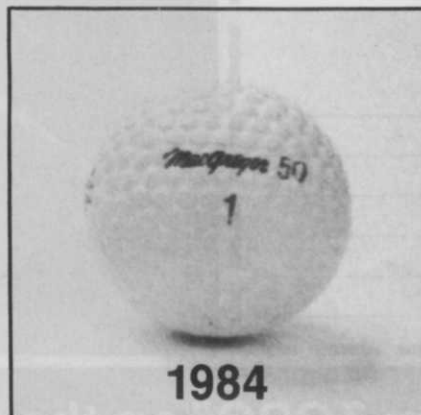
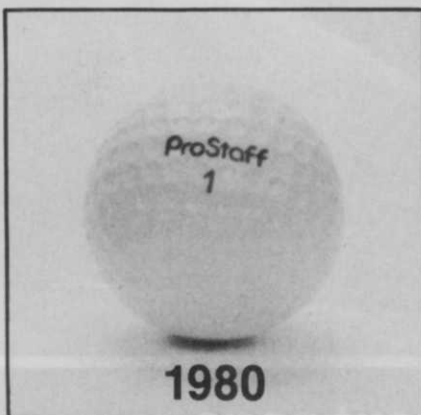
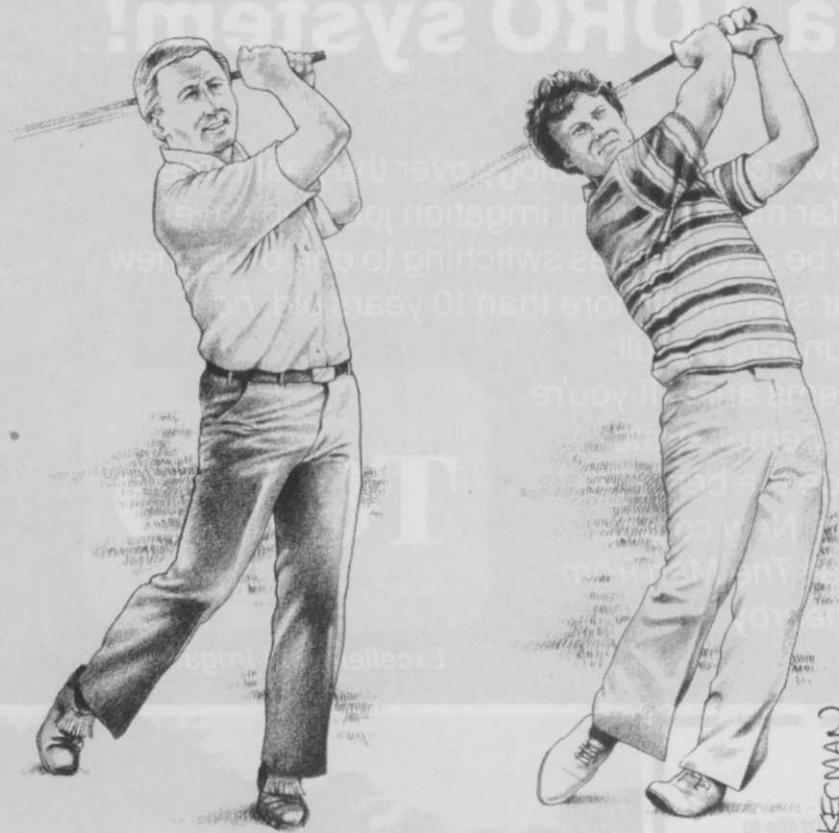
The short ball idea is a great teaching tool and one that is not limited to the MacGregor golf company \$2 per ball equipment either, for almost any sporting goods store carries sponge, plastic or whiffle balls for a lot less money.

But, if you can afford them, the Cayman balls would turn many a backyard into a nice driving range, (it already has at my house).

Thirdly, short ball golf is an alternative to golf much like a big version of miniature golf. It may become a novel attraction as "something to do," but it lacks the essential lure of golf and that is the thrill of seeing a well struck shot soar through the air for a few brief seconds, until it is almost out of sight.

Why else would some Japanese spend hours and hours per week on a driving range and never get to play golf. I doubt these folks would be so dedicated if all they had to hit were

*continued on page 97*







## ... And From the Superintendent's Viewpoint

Whether you're for it or against it, the short course concept is certainly a topic that stirs up mixed reaction among superintendents across the country. Most agree in concept with the idea, but for some, doubts in other areas surface. Will a short course cut down maintenance costs? Will it be the wave of the future? Does it have a place in areas across the country? Superintendents contacted by WEEDS TREES & TURF were candid and insightful. Their observations ...

**MARK KLIMM, Country Club of New Seabury, Mashpee, MA.** — "I think the concept is good, but has a limited use. I know the type of cli-



Jon Scott...booster shot for golf.



Willis Fuller...certainly has its place.



Joe Inman...helps more than hurts.

entele we have here wouldn't like it. We are part of a 2,300 acre residential condo resort development. Money and time aren't objects for the people here."

**NEIL "BUSTER" BUSTAMANTE, Mauna Lani Resort, Kawaihae, HI** — "You'd think with land being as expensive as it is in Hawaii and hard to come by, the idea would catch on here. But it hasn't and I don't think it will. I've been in the golf business 23 years in Hawaii and people come out to play a golf course, not a rinky-dink course. One course on Maui went from an executive course to a traditional regulation course because people want the longer course. It's hard for me to fathom the traditional golfer going into that (short course) market. Men look for distance, ladies are more finesse players. It probably does have an audience, though, among the elderly, kids and people learning how to play."

**FRANK DAVITT, Allentown Municipal Golf Course, Allentown, PA** — "I think there's definitely a place for it. What I'd like to see is for the course to be toughened up, not modified. I know we could use a course like that here."

**BRIAN MORRIS, Silverado Country Club, Napa, CA** — "Golf is too much of a traditional game for the short course idea to catch on. I think most will stick to a Par 3. Play would be limited on the shorter course because people would be playing the same fairway."

**JON SCOTT, Grand Traverse Resort Village, Acme, MI** — "I think it's a fantastic idea. It will be a very positive influence on the game and the number of people who play it. The primary benefit to the turf industry will be less cost; less cost to build, less cost to maintain and most likely, less cost to play. This translates directly to more golf courses, more income for the turf industry and more golf for more people, especially young people and seniors. It could just be the booster shot golf needs right now. As I understand it, the game is still played with the same clubs, skills and strategy. If the long ball hitter's ego doesn't get in the way, the short game and putting may once again be championed. A short course

could be in our future here. We have two courses now, a championship course of about 7,200 yards and a 6,700-yard course. Naturally, the short game will be looked upon with great apprehension by the "purists" and I respect their concern. However, just as executive and Par 3 courses have their place in the game, so will the short ball courses."

**PATRICK GREEN, World of Golf, Florence, KY** — "Americans like to hit the ball hard and see it go far. I don't think the idea will catch on here. It would probably be real popular in Japan where land is so expensive. We tried the lighter balls here. People just weren't that excited about it. It's OK for the driving range, though."

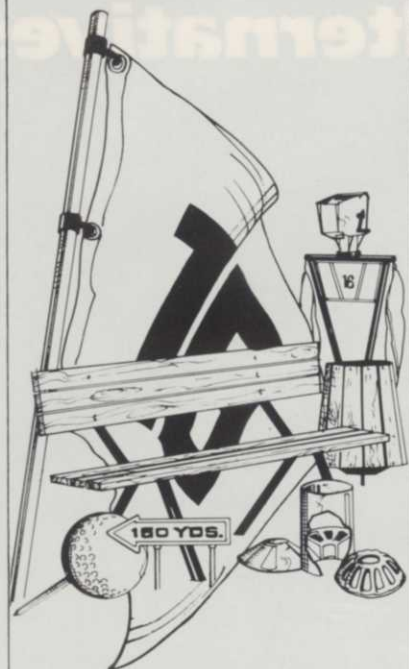
**WILLIS FULLER, Eufaula State Park Golf Course, Ufaula, AL** — "I think the game does need to be shorter. It takes too long for most people to play now. It would relieve traffic on the longer courses. We have lots of seniors here who would rather play a short course. It's not for everybody, but it certainly has a place. With the price of chemicals and machinery, it would also help maintenance costs."

**TOM FLAHERTY, Dennis Highlands, Town of Dennis, MA** — "The concept is a good one, but I don't know of any club, resort or private concern that could afford to pay a superintendent the same salary he'd be getting on a larger course unless they put him in charge of the entire operation."

**JOE INMAN, The Breakers, Palm Beach, FL** — "It's a good concept. It's almost like another sport, though. Being a resort hotel, we're always looking for alternative sports for guests. We could fit this right into our schedule. The more you have to offer, the more you can advertise. It would also draw a lot more places into golf that may not have golf now. I don't see it as competition to the traditional game of golf or regulation, championship golf courses. It's an alternative. I've got to hand it to (Jack) Nicklaus. He's gotten everything he can out of the game and now he's trying to give something back. It's going to help the whole golf industry more than it will ever hurt it. I just wish I would had thought of it." **WT&T**



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## CAYMAN from page 37

these 125 yard "pumpkin balls."

It is the far-flying characteristic of the well struck golf ball that is the lure to golfers. Equipment manufacturers invest millions trying to satisfy this need, and every revolution in golf has centered around making the ball fly further, going from the feathery to the gutta percha ball, from the gutta percha to the wound ball, from hickory to steel-shafted clubs and now it is to space age materials and computer designs.

**There is a certain lure to try the short ball alternative to golf for no other reason than curiosity or to become the local resident expert.**

Short ball golf is a brilliant publicity ploy for the Grand Cayman Islands and the Britannia resort. Had this short ball thing not become so widely publicized, I don't think many people would travel to Grand (where?) to play some 9 hole golf course. The concept did what it was supposed to do—make the resort famous. How long this notoriety will last remains to be seen.

### Perspective

I hope if this discussion has done one thing it has put the short ball idea into proper perspective.

The whole issue reminds me of the children's story about the emperor's new clothes.

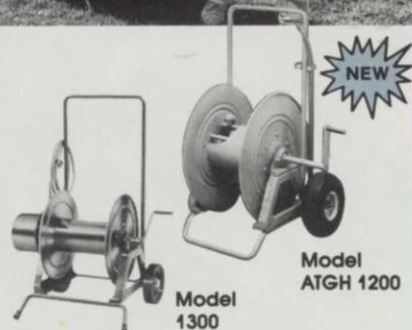
As I remember it, there was an emperor who commanded so much influence over his kingdom that when a slyster tailor made the king believe that instead of being nude he was simply wearing the lightest, most comfortable garments in the world, his subjects believed it, too. Then, one day, the emperor was parading in the street showing off his "new clothes," and a little innocent boy called out, "but mother, he doesn't have on any clothes at all."

Of course everyone admitted they couldn't see the clothes either and they all started to laugh at the foolish ruler.

The point is to not blindly believe the emperor, but to put the facts and situation into perspective and believe only what makes sense to you. **WT&T**

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