



CHICAGOLAND ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS

Verdure Newsletter

May 2006

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Upcoming Events

Chicagoland Meetings:

June 20 – Exmoor Country Club, Kurt Galisdorfer
July 13 – Cress Creek Country Club, Bill Kennedy

April Meeting:

Our meeting was held April 13 at Prairie Bluff Golf Course. Host, Ken Shepherd and the entire staff at Prairie Bluff provided a fantastic evening for our group with a total of 14 members and 5 guests in attendance. I hope the weather that evening was not a sample of things to come. The temperature in the parking lot read 86 degrees in my car. That is pretty warm for the second week in April. Director of Education, Tommy Witt, CGCS had a short video to show the contrasts in marketing between the PGA of America and GCSAA. Following dinner, Lee Miller from the Chicago District Golf Association led a discussion about Interactive Turf and poa seed head suppression with Proxy / Primo. Lee provided a handout covering an array of spring topics to be utilized on the course.



May Meeting:

The May 11 meeting was held at Aurora Country Club with our host being John Gurke, CGCS. It was a rainy dark evening; however, the team at Aurora Country Club made the attending 14 members and 4 guests feel welcome and accommodated our every need. The meal was spectacular featuring a fillet and lobster tail entrée. Tommy Witt, CGCS, Director of Education put together a terrific topic regarding renovation. Participants completed a worksheet prior to the meeting and provided 30 copies for distribution that evening. In traditional CAGCS round table discussion, pertinent items were brought forward by the many years of experience.



Seasonal Issues

A record month of April regarding warmer than average temperature resulted in rounds played at area golf courses were up from previous years. Unfortunately, the month of May began quite the opposite. In Wheaton, we had 9 days of measurable precipitation from May 10 – May 18. A total of 1.36 inches of rain fell through the period wetting the soil uniformly. The prolonged precipitation created a challenge, forcing us to alter our plans or in some cases, postpone them all together. One thing we all know that can't be postponed in the spring is mowing. Of course, over the last week it has been breezy and sunny and now things are dry. Here are some tips for making the best of a bad situation when having no other option than to mow when it does rain again.

Mowing Wet Grass

With the rainy weather lately, it is inevitable that you will have to mow when it is wet. Though we much prefer to mow when the grass is dry, it is better to mow when wet rather than waiting until the grass is dry but grown to 8 inches tall. A couple of pointers for mowing wet grass:

1. Sharpen the blade before mowing (like knives, a mower blade can never be too sharp)
2. Set the mower as high as possible
3. Remove mulching attachments in favor of side-discharge
4. Mow so the grass is discharged onto the already mown area
5. Mow as often as possible to break up the clumps from earlier mowings. "Double-mowing" or mowing twice in the same day dramatically helps to break up the clippings.
6. In the worse case, bag the clippings and use as mulch or compost

Chicagoland News around Town:

Consultants have been used for years in the business world. A company will bring in outsiders for an unbiased perspective of their operation. They may seek the advice of a consultant when considering expansion or making a radical change within their business. Consultants are also used to assess the current operation to assure that everything is running as efficiently as possible. Turf consultants have been used to some degree for a number of years on golf courses. However, their prevalence is increasing as budgets become tighter and the demand for perfection increases. In the May issue of Golf Course Management, an article entitled "Second Opinion" (page 46), outlines different consultants and the rationale behind their utilization by golf course superintendents.

Dave Ward, Golf Course Superintendent at Coyote Run in Homewood delved deeper into the subject and spoke with three seasoned veterans to find out to what extent they used consultants to improve the overall quality of their facilities. Here is what he found;

CHICAGOLAND NEWS AROUND TOWN			
Soil Consultant Use and Results			
QUESTION	Ken Shepherd Prairie Bluff Golf Course	Randy Wahler Knollwood Club	Alan Fierst Oak Park Country Club
Do you use a consultant?	Yes, Dave Marquardt, Brookside Labs	Yes, Tom Burrows, Brookside Labs since 1989	Yes, Tom Burrows, Brookside Labs
Do you use other consultants?	No	Yes, irrigation consultant and Kris Bachtell from Morton Arboretum	Yes, Paul Vermeulen from the USGA Green section and irrigation consultant
Why do you use a soil consultant?	Consultant has better knowledge of soils and waters and I want to cover all the bases	To get soil chemical properties in balance and because Burrows used to be a Superintendent, he knows what the course needs and over time, he teaches chemistry	Consultant develops protocols for turf management decisions
What is the main soil or water problem at your facility?	Low P and low K, and water doesn't drain through greens	Slow draining, tight soils and sodium buildup	Clay cap over underlying prehistoric river-run sand, calcium-magnesium ratio and sodium
Do you personally have a good understanding of soil tests and soil chemistry?	Took some soil classes but didn't retain much	After working with Burrows for 17 years has a pretty good feel for both	AI doesn't have an active handle on soil chemistry or test data
What results have you seen from following consultants advice	K levels and Ca/Mg ratio have improved, sodium less of a problem due to gypsum use	Ca/Mg are balanced, K levels are good sodium is down, turf takes stress better, less wilt, better internal soil drainage, acid injection important	Better water infiltration, better fertility response, healthier plant, acid injection helped during last years drought
Hypothetical question of the Month: Is it possible to change the soil pH in the Chicago region?	Not possible if you want to have any turf left	Not possible, the soil has too much buffering capacity and it would take train loads of sulfur to accomplish and of course, all the turf would die	Only slowly, very slowly; incrementally and microscopically so...no quantum leaps!

Host a CAGCS Meeting

We have been fortunate to have been provided with some fantastic venues to hold our meetings the last couple of years. It does not take a lot of effort to host a meeting and is very rewarding. Please consider hosting a monthly meeting at your facility. The meetings consist of cocktails, dinner and valuable roundtable discussions. If you are interested in hosting a meeting or would like to obtain further information, please contact Dan Marco, CGCS either by telephone, (630)986-4476 or via email ruthlakecc@aol.com. Dan has a few remaining spots to fill for the year.

New Members

If you are aware of someone that is not a member of CAGCS, please invite them to join you at a monthly meeting. The meetings are open to guests through the year with the exception of the annual meeting.

New Additions

Mike Matchen is a grandfather!! Natalie Paige Nesheim was born April 26 at 3:35 pm. She weighed 8lbs. 7 1/2 oz. and was 20 inches long. His daughter Jennifer, her husband Marc and baby Natalie are at home and doing fine. Congratulations Mike!!

Web Site

The Chicagoland Association of Golf Course Superintendents has a new web site. Launched March 14, 2006, the web site is in its preliminary stage of introduction and growth. You will be able to check upcoming monthly meeting venues and see all the new information for the Association. Please visit www.cagcs.org . If you would like to add something to the web site or have a suggestion, please email Jon Jennings chicagogolfclub@aol.com . The web site was created to assist members obtain useful information.

e-Verdure

If you would like to contribute to the Verdure or have some information you feel others would gain benefit, please contact Jon Jennings, chicagogolfclub@aol.com .The Verdure is another great way to disseminate information to our membership. By sending it electronically, the information is very current. The deadline for submitting information for the upcoming issue is the second Monday of each month.

U.S. Open Championship Philosophy:

With the month of June rapidly approaching, the United States Open Championship will soon be on the minds of everyone. Following is a list of guidelines utilized in preparation for the event.

By the United States Golf Association

The USGA selects venues for the U.S. Open that rank among the most challenging courses in the United States. We intend that the U.S. Open prove the most rigorous examination of golfers. A U.S. Open course should test all forms of shot making, mental tenacity, and physical endurance under conditions of extreme pressure found only at the highest levels of championship golf.

At the same time, we try to ensure that a well-played stroke produces a positive result for an Open competitor. We formulate a detailed, careful plan for conducting the Open over four-to-five days, but unanticipated variations in weather and other conditions may force consideration of daily adjustments to maintain appropriate playing conditions.

The following list of 14 factors impact overall U.S. Open course set up. The mix of these factors varies from course to course, year to year. Evaluation of course set up should not focus on any single element but consider the composite result.

1. Length, variation and playing characteristics of individual holes
2. Length of overall golf course relative to total par
3. Teeing ground locations (i.e., angles of play, variation of distance day to day)
4. Fairway width and contours
5. Fairway firmness and speed;
6. Green speed relative to percentage slopes and contours of the putting greens
7. Putting green firmness
8. Rough height, density and stages of severity
9. Bunker preparation (i.e., create challenge of recovery)
10. Green surrounds (e.g. closely mown areas -vs.- primary rough);
11. Hole locations (relative difficulty, balance in location of left-vs.-right, front-vs.-back, anticipated wind, anticipated length of approach shot)
12. Risk and reward options
13. Anticipated weather conditions
14. Pace of play.

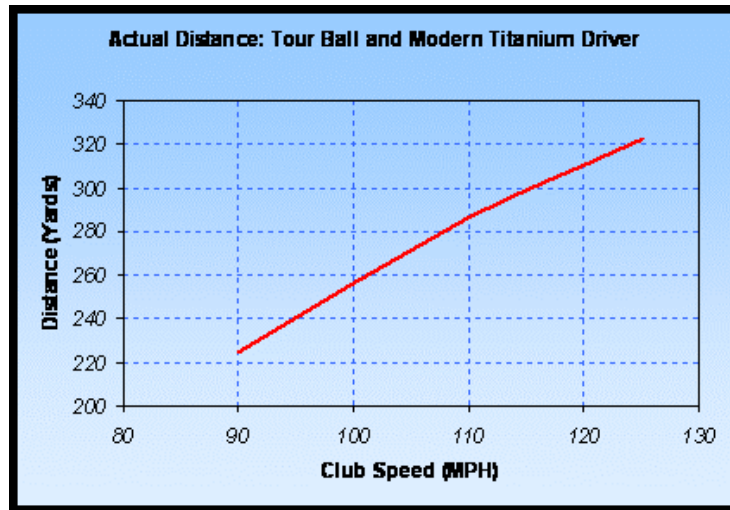
There is no USGA target score for a U.S. Open. While the final score at some U.S. Open sites will be at or near par, the USGA does not try to formulate a course set up that will only produce a winning score of at or near even par.

The Association typically begins preparing for a U.S. Open five to seven years in advance of the actual championship. This preparation process continues regularly throughout that extended period. The complexities of course set up, gallery management, traffic, transportation and parking, lodging, security, volunteers, media, corporate hospitality, and player needs continue to increase annually. Our goal is to provide everyone attending a U.S. Open with the finest experience possible, whether they are located inside or outside the ropes.

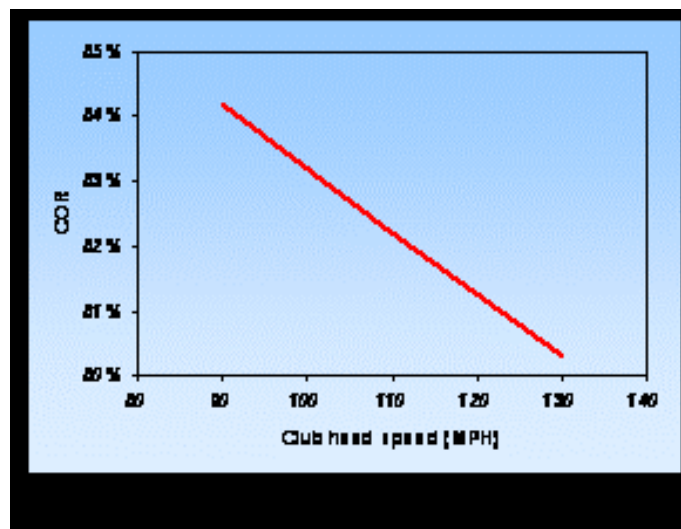
Do Long Hitters Get an Unfair Benefit? *By Steve Quintavalla, Research Engineer, USGA Test Center*

One opinion often accepted as conventional wisdom is that modern golf balls used on the PGA Tour give an unfair distance advantage to players with very high swing speeds. The thinking is that golfers with very fast swing speeds (115+ mph) have gained a disproportionate amount of distance because modern golf balls only get “activated” when they’re compressed at very high swing speeds, especially when struck by modern drivers. Another belief is that ball aerodynamics also result in disproportionately greater distance increase for those with very fast swing speeds. Let’s look at the physics, test results, and the actual PGA Tour driving distance results, to see what the *facts* really are.

What the Science Says: Actually, there is no extra distance “bonus” for high swing speeds. This is true for the new tour balls and all others as well. In fact, distance does not even increase linearly (see below), but rather it starts to fall off slightly at higher swing speeds – just the opposite of the popular misconception. To be sure, hitting the ball faster means it goes longer; it’s just that you don’t get as much bang-for-the-buck at the highest speeds.



Why is that? To answer, let’s look at what happens when you hit the ball. At contact, the club transfers some of its energy into the ball, which then speeds down the fairway. Aerodynamic forces - “lift” (which keeps the ball in the air) and “drag” (which slows the ball down) - then determine how far the ball will go.



The coefficient of restitution (or COR) measures how effectively club energy gets transferred into ball speed. The USGA has tested the COR of balls struck by modern titanium drivers at club head speeds from 90 mph (typical for an average golfer) up to 130 mph (faster than the longest players on tour).

It turns out that the COR for *all* golf balls decreases as clubhead speed goes up (see right). Repeated tests have proven again and again that the “energy boost” at tour-level speeds is a myth. In fact, the ball is *less* effective at translating energy into distance at higher swing speeds.

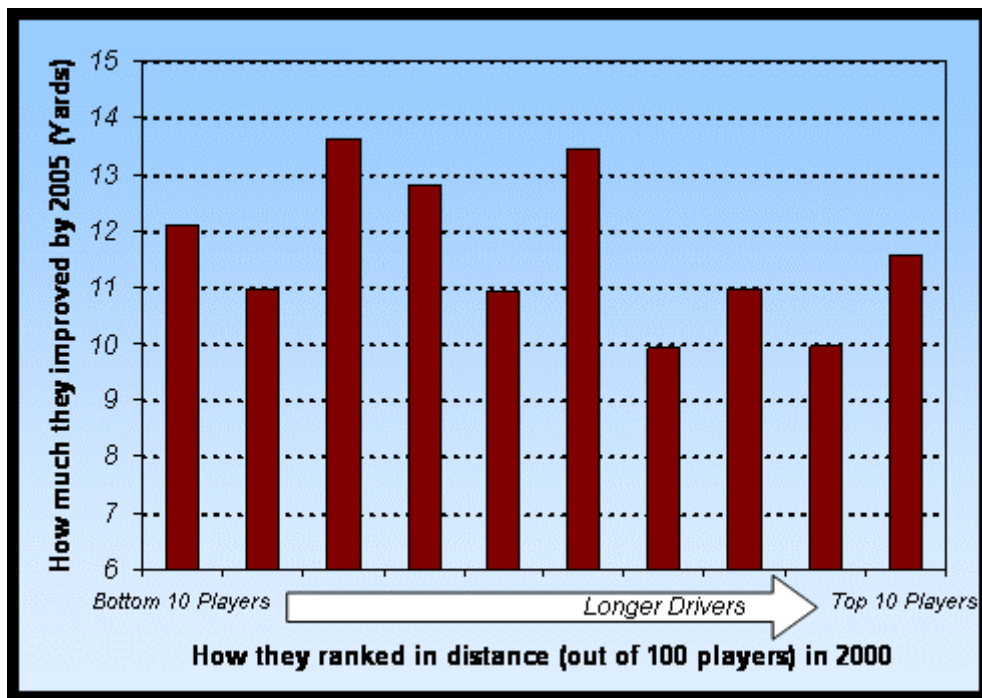
The USGA has also tested the aerodynamic properties of golf balls, including all of the balls currently used on tour (up to ball speeds more than 195 mph). Aerodynamic forces on the golf ball rise significantly with ball speed. Though lift (good for distance) is increased, drag (bad for distance) increases even more.

What the Stats Say: So, here’s a question: regardless of what the science says *should* happen, what actually *has* happened on the PGA Tour?

Let’s consider a couple of snapshots in time: In 2000, the most common ball used on Tour was a high-spinning wound ball and typical drivers were 250-300cc in size. By 2005 Tour players had entirely replaced the wound ball with advanced multipiece “solid” balls, and their drivers were typically near or above 400cc in size. So, how did these equipment changes affect Tour players with different swing speeds?

To answer the question, let’s look at the one hundred tour players who were on the Tour in both 2000 and 2005 and whose average driving distance was recorded in both 2000 *and* 2005 (courtesy: PGA Tour website). For these players, the average distance increase was 11.6 yards. Now, if it was true that these new, high-tech balls and drivers were benefiting the longer hitters the most, we would obviously expect to see that they had the biggest distance increase. However, as the chart clearly shows, this just wasn’t true.

Below, we see how players ranked in distance back in 2000 (in groups of 10, so the ten shortest players are at the left, the ten longest at the right): the heights of the bars show how much they increased their distance. In fact, the longest players (in 2000) did *not* gain the most distance over that five-year period.



Summing it all up: the science, the experiments, and the actual distances from the PGA Tour all say the same thing: the new balls and clubs used on tour *do not* give an extra distance “bonus” to players with higher swing speeds.