

Older and Wiser (At Least in My Opinion)

The wisdom of the ages.

BY JIM MOORE

Two things happened in my life a few weeks ago that made me realize I'm officially old. First, when I went out to my favorite course to play a few holes, I hit the ball so poorly that I decided to give it up for the day. Since it was far too nice a day to head back indoors, I decided to hawk golf balls for a while. I spent two very enjoyable hours finding other people's Pro Vs and picking up pecans. If that is not proof enough, my wife and I went to the movies that evening and they asked me if I wanted the senior discount. At 56 I barely qualify and have been too proud to take it — up until now. Hey, three bucks is three bucks.

The reason for making the case that I'm officially old is that this then qualifies me to be officially "cranky," although most of my coworkers would argue that I long ago achieved this status. Add to this the fact that recently I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a couple of hours with Jackie Burke Jr., who is one of the most straight-talking persons I have ever met in my life. I so admire his willingness to tell it as he sees it that I decided to follow his lead with a few choice opinions of my own regarding this industry.

- Too many golfers have completely lost their minds when it comes to

bunkers. If you don't like the fact that golf has become too expensive, you don't need to look any farther than the bunkers. Superintendents are spending fortunes on sand and even more on labor to try to make the bunkers "consistent." What a waste.

- Any architect who locates a green in a site that does not allow enough light to reach the turf should voluntarily refund the cost of moving the green when everyone finally realizes that grass needs light to grow.

- I don't understand spending thousands of dollars on soil testing when most state universities charge around \$25 per sample.

- Green speeds in excess of 10 feet are not fun for most players. The only people who benefit from such speeds are golf professionals, scratch players, fungicide salesmen, people who like to inflict pain on themselves, people who enjoy slow play, and everyone who is involved with rebuilding wonderful old greens that no longer have enough hole locations due to their contouring.

- Back to trees — the three best fungicides on the market are Echo, Stihl, and McCulloch (all three are chainsaws).

- As Jackie Burke emphatically pointed out to me during our visit, the US in USGA stands for *United States*. There are far too many states out there

that don't get to host top-level USGA championships. We in the USGA need to do a better job of promoting the game throughout the entire country.

- Kids just learning the game should get range balls for free or at least darn close to it. As long as a kid can go to a movie for less than the cost of a bucket of balls, we are going to have a hard time getting new players from middle- and lower-income families.

- Golf courses need to pay golf course workers fairly so this industry does not have to rely so heavily on people who come into this country illegally. Take the money that is being wasted on bunkers, trying to grow grass in the shade, and trying to produce U.S. Open conditions on a daily basis and use it to pay people decently.

- Working in golf is not nearly as much fun if you don't truly love the game. While we are all busy all the time, somehow we need to make a little more time to play, or at least find the time to look for a few lost balls and pecans.

Whew. That wore me out. Plus, it is 4:00 PM and I feel like heading down to the cafeteria for dinner.

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