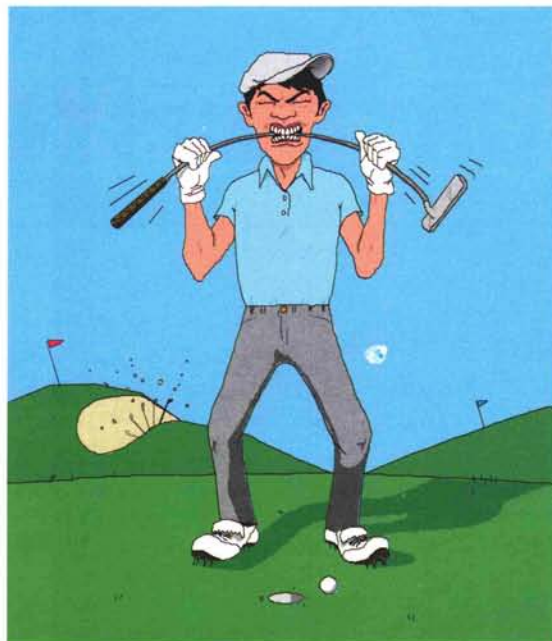


ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

It's Still Just a Game

by **JAMES FRANCIS MOORE**
Director, Mid-Continent Region,
USGA Green Section



I don't know about you, but I'm beginning to fear
That much has been lost from the game we hold dear.
The players, it seems, have made the decision,
The course must be made a thing of precision.

Each line must be perfect, greens pool table true,
The bunkers "consistent," the sand white and new.
Each hazard once different, must now play the same,
There simply can't be any luck in this game.

The rub of the green, bad hops and tough lies,
Are signs of bad care in today's golfer's eyes.
"Let's fire the course super, and hire one we know
Has control over Nature, who can force grass to grow."

I think I can prove my point to you all,
By briefly discussing a visit last fall.
To a course, I am sure, you would all recognize,
It's been on TV — the ultimate prize.

As an agronomist for the USGA, my routine was the same
On this fine autumn day,
The group was assembled, for the tour of the course,
The superintendent and me, and the Committee in force.

One lady, two seniors, three flat bellies and more,
I'd have to be careful, I could start a war.
There were few shared opinions in this group I could see,
So with great trepidation, I stopped at one tee.

"Just look!" they exclaimed, "our tee's thin and bare."
Well, it's too small, don't you see, and just look up there.
While the tree is truly a beautiful sight,
The grass on your tee doesn't get enough light.

They gasped and fell back — why, one nearly died.
"Are you saying that we should commit arborcide?"
I promise the memory of this tree will soon pass
When you once more can tee up your ball on the grass.

They scowled and they glared, all down in a hunker,
"To heck with the tees, let's look at a bunker."

"The traps all play poorly," said Flat Belly Three,
This sand must be bad — it couldn't be me."
"Our sand is just fine," the lady next said,
The seniors agreed it was all in his head.

No feathers were smoothed when I tried to explain,
That the bunkers are hazards, and that part of the game
Is to develop a "feel" for sand dirty or clean —
But the committee had already left for the green.

"They're too slow."
"They're too fast."
"They're too soft."
"They're too hard."
"They're too steep."
"They're too flat."
"They're worse than my yard!"

I tried to explain, their greens were quite good.
In fact, the ball rolled just as it should.
And that actually, their course was much better than most.
When it came to the game, they surely should boast.

Of conditions that offered a great deal of fun,
For mother or daughter, for father or son.
But this fell on deaf ears, for they just couldn't see,
That it's still just a game, and always will be.

The visit then came to an uncomfortable close.
I fear all I did was add to their woes.
They just couldn't see the good things that they had,
They'd lost their love of the game, and that's pretty sad.

My kids are just starting to learn how to play,
A game that has given me much through this day.
They'll learn to enjoy a shot that's hit well,
They'll learn that short putts can be living hell.

But they'll also learn that golf is much more,
Than a four-hour walk and posting a score.
Sure they'll beat it around, but when they are done,
I hope that like me, they'll find it's great fun.