



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER[®]

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Dear Subscriber:

When does an anomaly become a trend;
an aberration become our expectation?

Five years? Twenty-four years?

It is tempting to look only as far back as the last five consecutively mishandled U.S. Opens, but that trend, a *mini trend*, if you will, is the result of a more impactful and deeply-rooted problem, a *super trend*, that began in 1994. That problem is the intentional degradation of the U.S.G.A. president - executive director relationship that was relied upon for most of the 20th century.

In anticipation of the U.S.G.A.'s centennial year (1995) public and media relations expertise was a quality thought, by the past presidents, to be essential to whomever would rise to the presidency for 1994-1995. Reg Murphy, a newspaper publisher, was considered best to fill that role, and he was elected.

In the years that passed beyond his presidency, it seems clear that Mr. Murphy sought a more corporate structure for the association as a means of operating more profitably and perhaps a little more efficiently. He managed politically to bring a string of half a dozen presidents after him who furthered this new view. The relationship and the culture of discerning golf leadership in the president - executive director relationship was intentionally and slowly altered by the politics of a new leadership that implemented a commercial corporate structure whose goal was to monetize the U.S.G.A.

Gone were those such as Walker, Fownes, Bush, Grainger, Tufts, Foshay, Tatum, Campbell, Hand, Williams, Battle and Spaeth. Carrying on were those such as Murphy (x 2), Ridley, Driver, Vernon, Hyler, Nager,

O'Toole and Newell. On the executive director side Joe Dey, P.J. Boatwright and Frank Hannigan were retired or deceased, but David Fay held their legacy intact as long as he could. Then came Mike Davis.

Grant Spaeth [pres. 1990-91] could tell more about the conditions of championship turf with his pocket knife and his experience than much of the current staff seem to be able to do with their technology. David Fay [ex. dir. 1989-2010 and the 11 prior years on staff] relied upon the library in his mind to immediately discern when things were out of line. Known for avoiding the spotlight, he was never shy about taking a stand and expressing his view with erudition and good humor. "High tech," John Updike wrote in 1990, "can't replace nature's gifts of time and space. Golf used to be kind of a breather, and it has become more and more hard breathing."

The past five consecutive U.S. Opens have each been marked by unfortunate failures of design, re-design, agronomy, set-up or Rules gaffes. The U.S.G.A. staff works hard and spends a lot of money to see that this does not happen. Without, however, knowledgeable and historically informed leadership to set and maintain the cultural borders of the association from the very top, shortcomings are now predictable.

Suffice it to say that the degradation of the U.S.G.A. presidential and executive committee leadership criteria is the super trend that has now become the association's culture. There are few in that group with extensive time and achievement in the game, which were criteria considered essential at one time. Today it is business experience that comes first. How many before coming to the current executive committee conducted local qualifying, served as Rules officials or as presidents of state golf associations?

U.S. OPEN



SHINNECOCK HILLS
118TH

The intended result of this degradation is that the staff is in control with little or no informed supervision and little of their own to rely upon. Before 1994, discernment from the president and the executive director directed the staff in the valuable historical nuances that were the bedrock of the organization. All operations - championships, handicaps, green section, etc. - were conducted and could be defended by an understanding of the traditions developed since 1895. Today it is all about the money, which was the goal of the post-1994 elites.

Long ago, we passed through the crossroads of questionable set-up decisions and equipment standards that was eloquently described by Frank Nobile recently. Standing where we are today, we must be extremely careful. The strength of criticism following this Open has everyone shouting for a different approach.

Just changing things is too vague. The U.S.G.A. needs re-grounding in its traditions far away from its commercial partners, broadcast contracts or merchandise sales. Most important, the U.S. Open cannot be turned over to the professional golf tour, its staff or its former players. Professional players live for prize money, which is why they are called professionals. And just because they can hit a golf ball well does not mean they can direct the greater culture of the U.S.G.A. well. Remember, like you remember cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving, most golf professionals hate the U.S.G.A. They perceive the association as baby sitters, and they despise the oversight. They are second guessers when things go askew.

When the leadership question is asked, it is usually those with the microphones who ask it. Those with the mics are usually retired tour players who cannot be relied upon to answer this poignant question. Having a good appetite does not make you a good cook.

Even so, Ian Poulter asked an excellent question after Saturday's play when he wrote, "You don't get mulligans in business at this level. How can this team keep doing this without consequences?"

The U.S.G.A. needs to return to its cultural roots, the roots that distinguished the establishment of golf in America since 1895.

Piling on to the criticism of the 118th U.S. Open serves no useful purpose at this point. Enough of that has already been done. Countering the trend of commercialism and the replacement of what was simply an association of American golf clubs without a commercial corporate culture needs to begin immediately.

The members of the U.S.G.A., who are the member clubs, must consider retaking the nominating process,

by-laws, etc. With strong intelligent leadership, the members would be surprised at how much support they would muster.

Competition Notes

- At Shinnecock Hills the primary defense of par was the shaving of the greens (mostly convex), green collars and the run-offs. Those areas equalized whatever may have been gained by the wider fairways. That strategic decision was shared by the Club, the architects, and the U.S.G.A.

- The course was extended from 6,996 yards (2004 U.S. Open length) to 7,445 yards for 2018. The slope is calculated to be 146.

- The bumpy greens were a function of the cool temperatures, which did not allow the holes to grow in following the last aeration.

- Enlargement of some of the greens brought the shaved run-offs more into play.

- When the fairways were narrowed last fall, in order to avoid the Erin Hills effect, they were fertilized and thus the thick, full rough just off the fairways.

- Shinnecock Hills is the only club to host a U.S. Open in each of the last three centuries. The Club has admitted women since the day it opened.

- Thursday - 76.1 average score - of those tied for 13th position at +2, only one began play at the 10th tee.

- Friday - 73.6 average score - of those 67 players who made the cut at +8, 37 started from the 1st tee on Thursday and 28 started at the 10th.

<i>HOLES</i>	<i>1st & 2nd</i>		<i>10th & 11th</i>	
<i>Difficulty Ranked thru 72 holes</i>	<i>15th</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>8th</i>

- Saturday - 75.3 average score - Daniel Berger started at 10:13 and shot 66. Rickie Fowler started at 2:26 and shot 84.

- Sunday - 72.1 average score - Rickie Fowler started at 8:43 and shot 65. Daniel Berger started at 2:24 and shot 73.

Smilin' Phil

It was not complicated.

Phil Mickelson ran ahead and played a stroke at his ball while it was moving. His action was purposeful. There was no alien force field overpowering his freewill, even though his post-round comments did bring such a

thing into consideration. An hour after the infraction, after his round, Mr. Mickelson, in a live, on-air interview told Fox's Curtis Strange, "I just didn't feel like going back and forth and hitting the same shot over."

Mr. Strange asked if Mr. Mickelson thought the ball was going to roll off the green. "No question," replied Mr. Mickelson. "It was going to go down in the same spot behind the bunker. I wasn't going to have a shot, and I don't know if I would have been able to save a shot or what, but I know that it's a two shot penalty - hitting a moving ball. I tried to hit it as close to the hole as I could to make the next one, and you take the two shots and move on."

Mr. Mickelson's talking points, usually on 3 x 5 cards handed to him by one of his staff just before talking to the press, were stated and re-stated to Mr. Strange. No disrespect was intended; if any was taken, he apologized to those unintentionally offended; I took the two shots and moved on [now again].

"[He] did not speak at all apologetically," as P. G. Wodehouse wrote about Eunice Waters in *GOLF WITHOUT TEARS*, "but rather as a goddess might have spoken to a swineherd." Such was Mr. Mickelson's unsurprising rationalization of his infraction.

Surprised by the Rules Committee

Rule 14-5 simply states that "a player must not make a stroke at his ball while it is moving." The penalty is two strokes. Rule 1-2, however, also addresses exerting influence on the movement of a ball in play. The penalty, like Rule 14-5, is two strokes but also permits disqualification for a *serious breach* (when a significant advantage is achieved) of Rule 1-2.

Significantly, the first exception under Rule 1-2 states, "An action expressly permitted or expressly prohibited by another Rule is subject to that other Rule." And that is exactly where the U.S. Open Rules Committee chose to go and to stop. Because, the Committee ruled, Mr. Mickelson made a stroke, rather than stopping or deflecting his ball, he fell only under the jurisdiction of Rule 14.5, where serious breach is not an optional penalty.

The Rules Committee also chose to ignore another option available to them under Rule 33-7. "A penalty of disqualification may in exceptional individual cases be waived, modified or imposed if the Committee considers such action warranted."

Finally, the Committee chose to ignore the ultimate option available to them, an option that only David B. Fay, former executive director of the U.S.G.A. was sophisticated enough to discern moments after the infraction took place [see below].

Instead, Mr. Mickelson was treated in a special way, not unlike Tiger Woods was treated at Augusta in 2013, another Rules disaster overseen by a past president of the U.S.G.A. When Mr. Mickelson should have been held to a higher standard, he was not - not by the players, the Rules Committee or the former P.G.A. Tour professionals who were reporting and commenting on the situation as it happened.

The Rules are meant to be impartial. Even if you are Phil Mickelson you do

not get to do special things just because you meant no disrespect, or you were hungry, or a sports bet went the wrong way, or a Dean Foods stock play went the wrong way and you let it be known that if called to testify you would take the Fifth, or if you just trashed Hal Sutton or Tom Watson about their Ryder Cup captaincies. Mr. Mickelson usually gets a pass, and he got another one for this infraction.

Only Fay Immediately Got it Right

Just moments after Mr. Mickelson's infraction had been seen and replayed, Mr. Fay almost instantly made the proper call from the Fox broadcast booth. Apart from the obvious 14-5 violation and any 1-2 or 33-7 considerations, Mr. Fay said he thought it was "conduct unbecoming". That went over everyone's head because those words do not appear in *THE RULES OF GOLF*.

Mr. Fay's longevity, erudition and discernment in the game, and all aspects of its championship administration, had apparently taken him to the application all players execute and submit to enter the U.S. Open. The fourth category in the Eligibility section reads as follows:



Code of Conduct: *The U.S.G.A. may reject an entry application, revoke an accepted application, expel from the Championship and/or suspend a player from future championships if the player engages in conduct detrimental to the integrity and image of the game of golf and/or public confidence in the U.S.G.A. Such conduct may include, but is not limited to, damage to the golf course or the player's equipment, verbal or physical abuse of spectators, officials, volunteers, or staff, blatant or excessive profanity, disorderly behavior, failure to abide by club rules, or any other unbecoming conduct.*

Here was the authority for disqualifying Mr. Mickelson that did not need back-up with the rule book. Mr. Mickelson's behavior warranted disqualification, Mr. Fay quickly recognized that and his words "conduct unbecoming" pointed to how it could easily be handled.

Only Buck Revealed the Spin for What it Was

Among the Fox commentators, only Joe Buck, who has been criticized since 2015 for not knowing enough about golf to be a valuable commentator, saw Mr. Mickelson's talking points manipulation for what it was, and his call was on the mark.



For P.A.M.:

"After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up until a hunter came along and shot him. The moral: When you're full of bull, keep your mouth shut."

Will Rogers

Following the Strange interview, this on-air exchange took place between Paul Azinger and Mr. Buck:

Azinger, after professing his love for Mr. Mickelson: "Maybe he just thought, 'I was going to make that score anyway.' That's a pretty well thought out answer, I think. Phil's given it a lot of thought. ..."

Buck: "It seems to me to be a justification for losing his patience with the greens the way he's been putting. You can take that at face value, but it certainly seemed to be a justification for behavior that you don't expect out of one of the game's greats. It seems like justification for a guy who lost his temper, lost his cool, and was

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tying to send a message."

Azinger: "It didn't look good. I'll definitely say that. ... I just like Phil so much. I hope it doesn't change his reputation too badly. ..."

Buck: "I think it was an interesting way to justify poor behavior."

The advantage to having a non-P.G.A. Tour broadcast professional in the anchor position could not be more obvious; and the disadvantage to having P.G.A. Tour professionals in commentary positions could also not have been more obvious. The retired pros are part of the P.G.A. fraternity that relies upon their old, respected members' unctuous garrulity to defend other members' misbehavior.

Yours vly truly,

Gary A. Galyean
Editor & Publisher

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