

WINTER 2024

Reduced Flight Blues

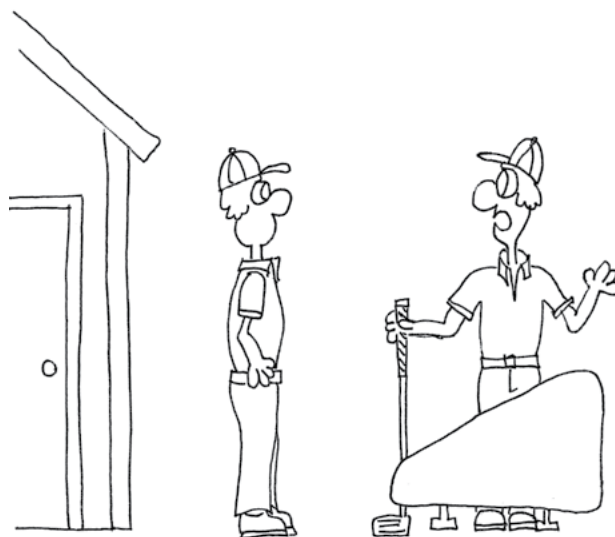
*Written by Doug Breen,
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Last week, I heard from my least reliable source (let's call him Jeff, because that's his name), that the Secret Cabal in charge of all things related to golf, are proposing to monkey around with the design of balls again. As always – the intent is to make them not go as far. I don't know who is in this Cabal, but I have to assume that they are the same folks responsible for the undersized basketball hoops on carnival midways and limiting the quantity of the more useful letters in our Scrabble games. Jeff also says that they're the ones making me use paper straws to drink out of plastic cups.

I chose to immediately panic.

My concern - was that if the Cabal reduces ball flight, I'll be forced to move up yet another set of tees. I'm soon going to run out of tees to move up to! I'm already losing range quicker than a Tesla in a Kapuskasing winter, and at my present rate of decline, in another ten years I'll be hitting it backwards. I now have the flexibility of a frozen bowling ball, and that's not going to improve.

Frustrated golfers will spend the weekly salary of a Bank Manager on a new driver each year; in a desperate and futile attempt to squeeze out an additional handful of yards down the fairway - only to be told that they're making a mockery of the game and must be stopped! Who are these people who are hitting it too far? I've played a lot of golf over the years, and I've never heard anyone say, "I'm hitting the ball too far, and it's ruining my day." Even when I play with guys like my son Walker, who can knock it a football field further off the tee than I do – they're also running the risk of landing on a different football field on the left or right.



What are my lesson goals? I'm hoping to work my way back to mediocrity.

I plug along with my senior, fat guy swing, stick to the middle of the fairway, and beat them on the green. I've also been relatively successful at extending my drives by aiming at cart paths on doglegs.

As I said earlier though; Jeff is an awesome fella, but not the best at relaying the finer (or the coarser) details of a story – so I went onto the Google Machine to see exactly how the Cabal was plotting to ruin my life. Well – it turns out they're only talking about taking "9-11 yards" away from touring Pros. The average drive on the PGA Tour is now a foot-wedge over 300 yards. Take ten yards off that, and it will mean.... nothing. We could take thirty yards off each drive, just by irrigating the fairways.

On the other hand, taking ten yards away from me, would be an entirely different kettle of fish. Fortunately, the internet said that the distance lost, will be proportional to club head speed. I have no club head speed. Tour

Players are in the 120mph range, I'm much closer to the speed limit. It turns out, that Jeff had me all tied up in knots over about three yards per drive.

Here's a thought – if we're really concerned that the guys on TV are hitting the ball too far, make it more of a penalty to miss the fairway. In the 1980's, golfers on the PGA tour, were hitting 20% more fairways than they do today. Why? Because someone ran the stats, and distance is twice as likely to save a stroke on the scorecard than accuracy. Due to modern maintenance practices, there is no significant penalty for an errant shot into rough or fairway bunkers. There was a time that missing the fairway could involve no irrigation, patchy turf, trees, brush, poison ivy, sadness, despair, and venomous snakes. There remains only one tournament

where players are truly terrified to miss the fairway, and we all know which tournament I'm referring to. US Open rough is ridiculous, but somewhere between Augusta and a hay field, there is a balance. We know that bunkers are too well manicured when golfers are aiming at them. If there is no risk in a risk reward proposition, then everyone swings for the fences. We could also take away some of the roll by raising height of cut on the fairway.

In the end, Jeff got me all worked up over something that really isn't going to have any effect on me, and limited effect on anyone that I know. To be honest, this is far from the first time that he's done this to me. He drives around all day listening to talk radio and sending me truly terrifying and often inaccurate texts. Turns out the Federal Government can't really read my thoughts and jail me for it, and changes to the golf ball by the Cabal, really won't hurt me either. ■