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The Biggest Threat to the Game

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(needs formating)

The Biggest Threat to the Game It's not slow play -- even though slow play sucks. It's not environmental regulation -- golf has nothing to fear from knowledgable lawmakers. It isn't nameless, faceless Tour professionals, especially not with Tiger Woods around. Nor is it lesbianism on the LPGA Tour, nor Ben Wright, nor Gary McCord at The Masters. The biggest threat to golf is the rising cost of playing the game. So why don't you hear more about it? Mainly because the world's golf writers haven't noticed -- they're too busy getting comp'd everywhere they play. It's even becoming a problem in the British Isles, whose famous venues are gouging tourists to the tune of $100 or more. At least, though, over there they do it for a good cause -- to subsidize the annual dues of members. In America, the construction cost of the average new golf course has gotten so high that they have to charge high fees simply to keep from going bankrupt -- and then all the moderately-priced courses raise their standard of conditioning 10%, and their green fees 35%. We don't even blink anymore at $50 green fees -- it's GOLF DIGEST's definition of an affordable golf course -- but even the most ardent golfing family could think of other interesting ways to spend $200. Who's to blame for the cost of a round of golf? - Developers, for building courses which can't profit except at high fees. - Architects, when they come up with grandiose designs instead of a more modest one that would work as well, and for blindly pushing projects to construction when they know the bottom line won't compute. - The USGA Green Section, for setting an ivory-tower standard for greens construction, and criticizing cheaper methods to the point that architects are afraid to look for affordable solutions. - Club green committees, for continuing to push toward the impossible goal of perfect turf regardless of expense. - Turf schools and the GCSAA, for teaching that a higher maintenance budget justifies a higher salary and more job prestige. - Golf magazines, for glorifying the courses with the highest ad budgets, which of course are funded by your green fees.

Someday we'll come back around to our senses; I just hope it doesn't take a new Depression to sort out the healthy from the insane.