

Thank You, Japan

by Tom Strunk

Once again, last week, Japanese officials took time out of their busy schedules to reiterate their claim that Americans are lazy and illiterate.

America's responses to these accusations have been mostly anti-Japanese sentiments, charged with a vow to 'Buy American.'

I would also like to say two words to the Japanese: 'thank you.' Thank you for analyzing our domestic situation better than any American politician, economist or auto executive.

Now, you might try to defend our country by crying that the Japanese do not play by all the rules. You could also argue that American workers do their best, and that they are treated better and get paid more than others. I am sure that the economic explanations are endless. Perhaps, the answer to our problems does not lie in economics, but rather in our priorities and lifestyles.

We need to look truthfully at ourselves and question the

validity of Japan's claims. Contrary to Japan's claims, we would like to think of ourselves as hard working and educated.

But are we? Is American society improving? Are our schools educating better students today than they were yesterday? Is our government running smoothly and efficiently? Is drug use declining?

The answer to these questions and a thousand more is no. America is on the verge of decay and decline. We have failed ourselves continually by dealing with our problems in a manner that is designed for the quick fix.

We have become too busy to take care of our problems properly. America's work ethic has become nothing more than a desire to get the job done with the least inconvenience to ourselves. Our priorities are simple: having fun and spending money. These are matched by Japan's priorities of working hard and saving.

These practices have resulted in a failure to invest in our future. In the past fifty

years the Japanese have realized the fruits of rigorous education and hard work. During the same period America has been blessed not only with unprecedented growth, but also cursed by a false sense of invulnerability. And today the future has



arrived. Japan's hard work has paid off, as they have eclipsed any advantage we had over them. In America we are now seeing the excesses of the past catching up with us. Our economic superiority has vanished and our once unquestioned educational superiority is a

joke.

When we look at our education system, is there any wonder that we are now falling behind the Japanese? The average Japanese student spends forty-two hours a week in school. The average American spends twenty-six hours a week in school.

Also the Japanese student devotes nineteen hours a week to studying. While their American counterpart only donates four hours a week to studying. With disparities such as these, it will be nearly impossible for America to compete in the future.

So what do we do? We let our politicians cut education funds and then we re-elect them. The American voter has failed to detect the relationship between voter apathy and political failure. Most years voter participation goes down and discontent rises. So do our domestic woes. We need to let the politicians know that education is our top priority.

We can only hope that the rude accusations made by the Japanese will result in a strong commitment to solve

our domestic problems.

We have spent the last fifty years fighting communism around the globe. We have won and that challenge has been met.

Now we need to take care of ourselves rather than other nations. We must start working together to eliminate our domestic failures, while realizing that the results will not be seen today or tomorrow. The time to question our convictions and priorities has been forced upon us by a foe that will not wait.

So if we somehow turn ourselves around we owe it all to the Japanese for tapping us on the shoulder and reminding us that we are no longer alone atop the world, and that no one can stay there without facing facts and working very hard.

Tom Strunk is a fourth semester history major. His column appears every other week in The Collegian.

Like trade, golf is an international game

by Mike Royko

The executive from the Ben Hogan golf club company was indignant. And maybe he had reason to be.

He had just read a column about the "Buy American" crusade in which I said it was difficult to know which products are really American.

I had given a number of examples, including these two paragraphs:

"Maybe you are a golfer planning on buying a new set of clubs this spring. But only a couple of American-owned companies remain. 'Ben Hogan' might be stamped on it, but the company is owned by some sushi-eater.

"So you seek out those American-owned companies and buy their clubs, and you will be able to say you buy American, right? Not really, because all they do here is assemble shafts and club heads they buy overseas."

The Hogan exec thought I was misleading readers (and patriotic, potential golf-club customers).

True, Hogan is owned by Cosmo World, a giant Japanese corporation.

But as the executive said: "We make our clubs here," meaning Texas, U.S.A. And he added: "We buy our forgings from a Chicago company."

Which is true, because I also heard from the Chicago company, Cornell Forging. The president

expressed pride in his long relationship with the Hogan company.

So I was wrong, right? Well, not really. All I said was that the Hogan company is owned by the Japanese. And that's entirely correct. Japan is where the profits will wind up.

But the Hogan executive had a point. The heads on the highly-regarded Hogan irons, which are the company's main product, begin life in Chicago, produced by Americans working for an American-owned company.

The forgings are then finished at the Hogan company by American workers.

So we can say that while the company is owned by the Japanese, the product is American.

Well, that's not entirely true, either. After the executive called, I became curious.

A golf club also has a shaft. Most of Hogan's shafts are made by True Temper Sports, which is owned by Black & Decker, which is an American company.

That's good, if you believe in buying American.

However, Hogan also offers clubs with shafts that are made of graphite. And it turns out that those shafts come from United Sports Technologies, Dallas, which is owned by Olympic Co. Ltd. of Japan.

An executive at United Sports Technologies said: "Our shafts are manufactured in Japan and

finished here. We basically apply paint coats and the logo and the graphics to the shaft."

So that means that if you buy the Hogan forged irons with metal shafts, you'll get a product entirely made by Americans, although the company is owned by the Japanese. (The grips are made here by an American company.)

But if you prefer graphite



shafts on your irons, only the head and grips will be made by American workers; the shafts come from Japan. However, they are polished by American workers.

So that's that. Almost.

Hogan also makes woods, although most modern woods are made of metal, which means they are metal woods. That doesn't make sense, but neither does golf.

Anyway, the metal-wood

heads are made by a company called Cast Alloys in California. It is American-owned. So if you buy a Hogan metal wood, you are getting an American product, right? Well, almost.

The company makes the heads, but then it ships them across the border to Tijuana, Mexico, where the polishing is done. The polishing must be important, since the Mexican plant has 350 workers, while the American plant has only 150.

Then there are the shafts. If your Hogan driver has a traditional metal shaft, you will have received a 100 percent American shaft. (Why does that sound like a political statement?)

But if you prefer the higher-tech graphite shaft, it will come from Japan and be finished off by Americans. In which case, you will have a club shaft has an American-made head, polished by Mexicans, with the shaft coming from Japan, although finished by Americans. And the profits will go to Japanese tycoons.

Are you still there? And you understand? No? My advice is, take up bowling.

What surprises me is that I heard from the Hogan executive but not from anybody at another golf company, Karsten Manufacturing Corp.

As most golfers know, Karsten makes clubs called Ping. The name sounds like it might be Asiatic. ("I am Ping. This is Wong.") But it's an American

company, founded by a mechanically-inclined hacker named Karsten Solheim, who thought he could make a better club in his garage. He did. An ugly thing it was. But Karsten is now the biggest club maker in America, probably the world.

Basically, I was right about the Hogan company because all I said was that it was owned by the Japanese.

But then I wrote that all the American-owned companies do is buy foreign parts and assemble them here. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

That's what most American-owned golf companies do. But not Ping. As they will tell you, if you ask, they produce all of their own stuff. In fact, they ship clubs all over the globe. That helps reduce our trade deficit, which is a patriotic thing to do.

More important, it puts golf clubs in the hands of foreigners. And if enough of them play the game, they, too, will become potbellied idlers, wearing foolish-looking clothes and drowning the memories of their miserable scores in the clubhouse bar.

And that is known as fair trade.

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