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Disability rights come to pro sports

After digging itself a hole that seemed too deep to climb out of, the PGA was forced by a federal court Wednesday to allow a golfer with a leg disability to ride in a cart during tour events.

The golfer, Casey Martin, sued the association under the Americans with Disabilities Act after it refused to accommodate a disability that prevents him from walking long distances. It was the first case involving a major sport. The decision is a major victory for people with disabilities who face an uphill battle against blind tradition.

Shortly after the decision the PGA embraced Martin. Commissioner Tim Finchem said, "Casey Martin is a guy you want playing on the PGA Tour. He is an extremely popular individual and a role model. How would you not want him playing?"

However, the PGA has announced it will appeal the decision.

Tour spokesman Bob Combs offered comments that sharply contrasted those of

the commissioner, saying, "It simply is not about Mr. Martin."

But it is – and about others facing the same predicament: overcoming one's handicap to attempt to do something one has always wanted to do.

The PGA is vehemently standing by its principles, which allow it to make up and govern its own rules. But it will still provide Martin with a cart on March 3 for the Nike Tour's Greater Austin Open.

The PGA's attempt to liven its public relations campaign is imminent, but embracing Martin after showing pure neglect in court toward his medical condition is hypocritical.

Martin's leg is not healing any faster, and his doctors have told him there is a chance he could lose it within the next few years.

As the PGA awaits the legal system to dictate its pace, it should concentrate more on letting Martin play at his.