

Parting Shot

It's time to go back to the classroom

Is it just me or is a round of golf taking longer and longer at more and more courses? Last summer I played a public course where it took fully six and a half hours on a hot day to finish. I was finished all right. So was everybody else.

The problem of slow play is increasing as the popularity of golf accelerates and new players take to the sport. Bottom lines are going to be affected too. The mathematics are simple: not as many players can get around a course when rounds take forever.

There's something else to consider. Corporate golf is on the increase, as more companies conduct outings for their employees and clients. That's wonderful for bonding, but people don't need six hours on a course to get to know one another.

Golf is a business. That's why this publication exists. It's in a course operator's best interest to educate people about the proper pace of play. The responsibility begins with course operators. Then, provided with education and information, golfers should be expected to play at sensible pace.

Every club should have some sort of informational program to educate slowpokes about how to move along. Clubs should hand out a booklet to every player telling them the fundamentals of how to maintain a reasonable pace of play.

Signs saying how important it is to keep up with the group ahead aren't enough. What if a player is so naive about how to keep up that he can't keep up? He or she might not know how to play differently. Here's where a clearly referenced booklet can help. Or how about employing a course ranger? But the ranger must be given sufficient authority. He has to feel free to tell people to keep up or threaten to pull them off the course.

Okay, maybe that's heresy, but it won't take long before golfers realize they must keep up. And wouldn't it ultimately be good for business if players realize that pace of play is going to be taken seriously? Courses that don't keep up would find their revenues falling.

Why not conduct classes during early evenings when the first tee is free? Once a week or more a club could take people out over the first two or three holes and show them ways of keeping up the pace. Of course not only new golfers are slow golfers. Anybody should be allowed to attend these information/playing sessions. They could even be fun.

And while clubs are at it, why not also discuss course etiquette? I visited a course last summer where on one tee, three teenagers were fencing with their golf clubs. They were lucky not to injure one another. These kids were having a good time on the course, but they needed to learn something about etiquette.

Although it's impossible to control everything that goes on around a 150-acre property, it shouldn't take a lot of effort to achieve a little. Owners should make the effort on a "need to know" basis. Plenty of golfers, both experienced and new, need to know. Clubs should teach them.