

Can we make Golf the game of choice in 2014?

It is time to turn our minds to the 2014 season and get back into the swing of Golf!

Many of us are hard at work creating new ways to engage golfers and to make the game more exciting and competitive. However, throughout the process, I have realized that so many of us have forgotten the vocabulary that introduces, educates, and focuses the golfer on the most important part of the game - HAVING FUN. Well, a big part of that is what Golf Canada is calling playing to "Your Number" in the GolfFun program. Let's begin with some basic statistics:

1. There are 5.7 million golfers in Canada.
2. 5-8% or roughly 325,000 golfers have a registered handicap.
3. 40 years ago roughly 90% of the courses were private and the remaining courses were public facilities.
4. Today roughly 90% of courses are public and the remaining courses are private.
5. Almost all those carrying a handicap belong to a private or semi-private course (100,000 are members of private clubs. 225,000 are members of semi-private clubs.)

So, what have we forgotten to do as we have evolved from the era where private courses dominated the landscape to one where the public courses dominate the landscape? We have forgotten to introduce and



The Parting Shot

Golf: The Game of Choice

incorporate the most important aspect of the game: The Handicap. That element allows every golfer to come out and play to WIN, regardless of their age, gender, strength, size, or skill level. I do not know of another game that has that element built into the fabric of the game.

Very few of today's golfers understand or use the handicap system. We have all (and I mean all of us in the industry) forgotten to make it part of the game. Swing mechanics, longer drives, and better putting are all relevant to the game but they do not replace having a great time and maybe even winning from time to time.

Golf Canada in consultation with the NGCOA Canada is working hard to change that trend and they need the entire industry to champion this cause. The golf industry needs to turn the forgotten "game leveler" into a game changer.

If you are wondering why I am so passionate about this, my father, who recently passed away, was a perfect example of this. He picked up the game late in life, he never hit a drive

more than 200 yards (always down the middle), he was short in stature, but passionate about playing the game. Why? Because as an 18 handicap he could beat a 2 handicapper without all the technique and skill of a great athlete. He understood that he simply had to 'PLAY TO HIS NUMBER.' He played his number many times and there was never a bigger smile on his face than when he did. That winning smile is what this game about.

Let's put more smiles on people's faces this coming season.

*Reto Steiner
Owner, Woodside Golf Course
President, NGCOA Canada
reto@woodsidegdc.com*

The opinions expressed in the Parting Shot are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of the Golf Business Canada magazine or the NGCOA Canada.