



THE THONG ADJUSTER



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The Putter speaks

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Tournament

This time next month we'll be congratulating the winners in our fourth ITG Tournament! We'll have a photo spread and a complete list of winners, losers and in-betweeners (which will probably include yours truly!). So make sure you have your dues paid and your five rounds in, because our semi-annual tournaments are really the highlights of our year.

New members

We have a couple of new members since last issue. The Iron Thong Gang welcomes Paul "Don't Write Down a" Tenner and Eugene "E-Fed" Fedelin to our ranks. This gives us a total of 35 members. We're definitely a growing group. Keep on telling your friends about us. The more members, the more clout we'll have with courses in the San Antonio area. The result could be lower fees and prime tee times.

Big ideas

Face it, most of us have ideas. Well, at least we all have opinions. Don't hesitate to let your ITG officers know if you'd like to play a different type of competition one week, or go to a different course, or start a new voluntary pool. Perhaps you have a suggestion to make our scoring easier or quicker, or you have a personal golf challenge you want to make to our group. Whatever your idea, let us know. How about a field trip to Houston or Bastrop? This is your group. We need your ideas to keep us moving.

See you on the 22nd at The Golf Course of Texas. Bring your "A" game!
Steve





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Go to <http://www.IronThongGolf.com> to view the current issue.

Articles, including for sale items, can be submitted at any time. Send them to the editor at stevevanwert@hughes.net.

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Just 'fore' laughs



‘He drives for show and cheats for dough.’



“Don’t move!”



FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about Golf

Q

In a singles match play event, the players share a motorized cart. In searching for a ball, the moving cart strikes and moves a player's ball. What is the penalty, if any?

A

If the cart was being driven by the player whose ball was moved, then that player incurs a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2a. If the cart was being driven by the opponent of the player whose ball was moved, then no penalty is incurred as Rule 18-3a applies. In either case, the player must replace his ball as directed in Rule 18.

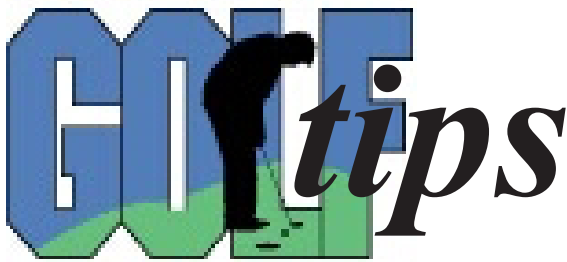
Some rule changes for 2008

Beginning in 2008, a golfer will be allowed to lift a ball for identification in a bunker or water hazard. However, there now will be a two-stroke penalty for playing a wrong ball from a hazard. In match play, the penalty will be loss of hole.

These notable changes to Rules 12-2 and 15-3 are among the amendments to the Rules of Golf agreed upon by the USGA and R&A that took effect Jan. 1.

Another notable change is the reduction in penalty in Rule 4-1 for carrying, but not using, a non-conforming club. The penalty has been reduced from disqualification to, in stroke play, a penalty of two strokes per hole, with a maximum penalty of four strokes for the round.

The penalty for the accidental deflection of a ball by a player, his partner or either of their caddies or equipment under 19-2, will be reduced to one penalty stroke in both match play and stroke play. In 2007, the penalty was loss of hole in match play and two strokes in stroke play.



Quick tip: Chip with a hybrid

By Robert Baker
GOLF Magazine Top 100 Teacher

When to use it

Safe Play: Your ball is caught between the rough and apron, or between the apron and the green — tough situations for both wedge and putter.

Sane Play: On the apron, with plenty of room between you and the pin.

Scoring Play: From a collection area, or over any mound between you and the pin.

Which One?

Use your highest-lofted hybrid club to loft the ball over longer grass around the green, and to create more forward roll once it lands.

Why it Works

Putting from off the green—even from long distances—is a much better option than chipping the ball. The problem is, no one putts well from long distance because it's difficult to convince your mind to putt as hard as you need to. The extra weight and longer shaft length of a hybrid allow you to make a smooth, short stroke and still create a lot of distance. **The rounded sole should calm any fears you may have about hitting the shot fat or thin.**

Put the club to work

The chip-putt with a hybrid is powered mostly by your shoulders, with just a little wrist hinge and a touch of forward knee movement. Even from distances as far as 100 feet, a hybrid gives you plenty of club to roll the ball close, so concentrate on making your normal putting stroke. (Yes, practice is recommended to develop distance control and touch.)

Add Touch to your chip-putts

Setup

- Play the ball under your right eye.”
- Narrow your stance (heels just inside your shoulders) and set your weight slightly forward.”
- Sole your club on the ground and set the face square to your target line.

Backswing”

- Swing the triangle formed by your arms and shoulders in a pendulum motion.”

GOLF tips

Use your hybrid as a chipper

Continued from page 4

- Add a little wrist motion to increase your feel for the shot.”
- Keep your lower body quiet.

Through-swing”

- Unhinge your wrists—put back what you took out.”
- Accelerate! Don’t hit at the ball, just simply let it get in the way.”
- Add just a touch of forward knee movement.

Free yourself

A hybrid isn’t a putter, so don’t swing it like one. Golfers guilty of this mistake end up locking their arms and making jabs instead of smooth moves through the ball. Make a more fluid stroke by adding some wrist hinge to your backswing and lower-body motion to your through-swing.

Try this drill: Grip the club with your left hand hanging an inch over the butt end of the handle and make mock chip swings. Feel how it frees up your wrists and gives your swing a more natural feeling.



Golf in the More Americans are giving up golf



By Paul Vitello, The New York Times
Published: February 21, 2008

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. — The men gathered in a new golf clubhouse here a couple of weeks ago circled the problem from every angle, like caddies lining up a shot out of the rough.

“We have to change our mentality,” said Richard Rocchio, a public relations consultant.

“The problem is time,” offered Walter Hurney, a real estate developer. “There just isn’t enough time. Men won’t spend a whole day away from their family anymore.”

William Gatz, owner of the Long Island National Golf Club in Riverhead, said the problem was fundamental economics: too much supply, not enough demand.

Over the past decade, the leisure activity most closely associated with corporate success in America has been in a kind of recession. The total number of people who play has declined or remained flat each year since 2000, dropping to about 26 million from 30 million, according to the National Golf Foundation and the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association. More troubling to golf boosters, the number of people who play 25 times a year or more fell to 4.6 million in 2005 from 6.9 million in 2000, a loss of about a third. The industry counts its core players as those who golf eight or more times a year. That number, too, has fallen, but more slowly: to 15 million in 2006 from 17.7 million in 2000, according to the National Golf Foundation.

The five men who met here at the Wind Watch Golf Club a couple of weeks ago, golf aficionados all, wondered about the reasons. Was it the economy? Changing family dynamics? A glut of golf courses? A surfeit of etiquette rules — like not letting people use their cellphones for the four hours it typically takes to play a round of 18 holes? Or was it just the four hours?

Golf course owners have tried various strategies: coupons and trial memberships, aggressive marketing for corporate and charity tournaments, and even some forays into the wedding business.

Over coffee with a representative of the National Golf Course Owners Association, the owners of four golf courses strategized about marketing to women, who make up about 25 percent of golfers nationally; recruiting young players with a high school tournament; attracting families with special rates; realigning courses to 6-hole rounds, instead of 9 or 18; and seeking tax breaks, on the premise that golf courses, even private ones, provide publicly beneficial open space.

“When the ship is sinking, it’s time to get creative,” said Mr. Hurney, a principal owner of the Great Rock Golf Club in Wading River, which last summer erected a 4,000-square-foot tent for social events, including weddings, christenings and communions.

The disappearance of golfers over the past several years is part of a broader decline in outdoor activities — including tennis, swimming, hiking, biking and downhill skiing — according to a number of academic and recreation industry studies.

A 2006 study by the United States Tennis Association, which has battled the trend somewhat successfully with a forceful campaign to recruit young players, found that punishing hurricane seasons factored into the decline of play in the South, while the soaring popularity of electronic games and sports like skateboarding was diminishing the number of new players everywhere.

Rodney Warnick, a professor of recreation studies and tourism at the University of Massachusetts, said that the aging population of the United States was probably a part of the problem, too, and that “there is a younger generation that is just not as active.”

But golf, a sport of long-term investors — both those who buy the expensive equipment and those who build the princely estates on which it is played — has always seemed to exist in a world above the fray of shifting demographics. Not anymore.

Jim Kass, the research director of the National Golf Foundation, an industry group, said the gradual but prolonged slump in golf has defied the adage, “Once a golfer, always a golfer.” About three million golfers quit playing each year, and slightly fewer than that have been picking it up. A two-year campaign by the foundation to bring new players into the game, he said, “hasn’t shown much in the way of results.”

“The man in the street will tell you that golf is booming because he sees Tiger Woods on TV,” Mr. Kass said. “The reality is, while we haven’t exactly tanked, the numbers have been disappointing for some time.” Surveys sponsored by the foundation have asked players what keeps them away. “The answer is usually economic,” Mr. Kass said. “No time. Two jobs. Real wages not going up. Pensions going away. Corporate cutbacks in country club memberships — all that doom and gloom stuff.”

In many parts of the country, high expectations for a golf bonanza paralleling baby boomer retirements led to what is now considered a vast overbuilding of golf courses.

Between 1990 and 2003, developers built more than 3,000 new golf courses in the United States, bringing the total to about 16,000. Several hundred have closed in the last few years, most of them in Arizona, Florida, Michigan and South Carolina, according to the foundation.

Courses are listed for sale on the Web site of the National Golf Course Owners Association. For example, a North Carolina property described as “two 18-hole championship courses, great mountain locations, profitable, \$1.5 million revenues, Bermuda fairways, bent grass, nice clubhouses, one at \$5.5 million, other at \$2.5 million — possible some owner financing.”

At the meeting here, there was a consensus that changing family dynamics have had a profound effect on the sport.

“Years ago, men thought nothing of spending the whole day playing golf — maybe Saturday and Sunday both,” said Mr. Rocchio, the public relations consultant, who is also the New York regional director of the National Golf Course Owners Association. “Today, he is driving his kids to their soccer games. Maybe he’s playing a round early in the morning. But he has to get back home in time for lunch.”

Mr. Hurney, the real estate developer, chimed in, “Which is why if we don’t repackage our facilities to a more family orientation, we’re dead.”

Why do golfers yell “Fore” for errant shots?

“Fore” is another word for “ahead” (think of a ship’s fore and aft). Yelling “fore” is simply a shorter way to yell “watch out ahead” (or “watch out before”). It allows golfers to be forewarned, in other words.

The British Golf Museum cites an 1881 reference to “fore” in a golf book, establishing that the term was already in use at that early date (the USGA suggests the term may have been in use as early as the 1700s). The museum also surmises that the term evolved from “forecaddie.”

A forecaddie is a person who accompanies a group around the golf course, often going forward to be in a position to pinpoint the locations of the groups’ shots. If a member of the group hit an errant shot, the thinking goes, they may have alerted the forecaddie by yelling out the term.

It was eventually shorted to just “fore.”

A popular theory is that the term has a military origin. In warfare of the 17th and 18th century (a time period when golf was really taking hold in Britain), infantry advanced in formation while artillery batteries fired from behind, over their heads. An artilleryman about to fire would yell “beware before,” alerting nearby infantrymen to drop to the ground to avoid the shells screaming overhead.

So when golfers misfired and send their missiles - golf balls - screaming off target, “beware before” became shortened to “fore.”

This is another term, however, whose exact origin can’t be stated. It does originate, however, in the fact that “fore” means “ahead” and, used by a golfer, is a warning to those ahead.

