

# Golf's Wonderful Traditions

*"In the fields called the Links, the citizens of Edinburgh divert themselves at a game called Golf, in which they use a curious kind of bat tipped with horn and small elastic balls of leather, stuffed with feathers."*

*Tobias Smollett Humphrey*

*"How could golf survive and flourish through the centuries, being passed down from generation to generation? The answer—tradition."*

*Brad Brewer*

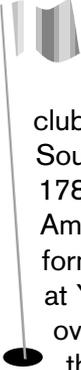
**S**ome scholars trace the origins of golf back to the time of the Roman Empire and a game called *paganica*. The French developed a game called *jeu de mail* and the Dutch played *kolven*. However, most golf historians believe the Scots should be credited with the game we know today as golf. In Scotland, golf was originally played on seaside links. The Scots took their skills, along with their passion for the game, with them all over the world. They developed the first golf clubs and balls and established standards and rules that are still observed today. Reading about the fascinating origins of the sport is time well spent. (Included in the Resources is a list of interesting books on the subject.)

The question is—how could golf survive and flourish through the centuries as it was passed down from generation to generation? The answer is—tradition. And what a rich and wonderful tradition it is!

## Golf: The Sport of Honor

Perhaps golf's finest tradition is honor. Playing by the rules and observing proper golfing etiquette are two examples. Golfers usually are the first to find their own ball and honor requires not cheating by moving it—unless permitted by the rules. In some cases, when a golfer inadvertently moves a ball while in the act of addressing it, honor dictates calling a penalty on yourself. I can't think of any other sport where there is such a reliance on the honor of the participants. Maybe that's why the game has endured over centuries.

### HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHT



Scottish officers fighting in the Revolutionary War brought golf to America. The first organized club is believed to have been the South Carolina Golf Club, formed in 1786. However, the popularity of American golf began with the 1892 formation of the St. Andrews Club at Yonkers, set in an apple orchard overlooking the Hudson River and the Palisades of New Jersey. It took only a day to lay the course out between the apple trees.

Golfing immortal Bobby Jones once penalized himself a stroke that cost him the tournament. His comment was: "You might as well praise a man for not robbing a bank."

Keeping your own score is a necessity of the game and honestly writing it down validates the honor and trust of the sport. Etiquette, or our behavior, on the course is also an important part of golf's tradition. We all must be careful not to have a detrimental effect on any other golfer's game. We'll look at rules and etiquette in depth later in this chapter.

## Golf's Special Language

Just as it's advisable to learn the relevant computer jargon before you navigate around with software, the same is true with golf. Many of the terms and phrases first used by the caddies walking the links of The Royal and Ancient St. Andrews in Scotland are still used today. Others have been added as the sport evolved.

Can you match the following definitions with their golf terms? Beginning golfers should find this a lot of fun.

| <b>Definitions</b>  | <b>Terms</b>   |
|---|----------------|
| 1. A ball that was struck above its center causing it to skid along the ground                          | a. scramble    |
| 2. Hitting the ground before hitting the ball   | b. pin         |
| 3. Taking an additional shot from the same location   | c. skull       |
| 4. A ball partially buried in a sand hazard   | d. dance floor |
| 5. The part of the club that rests on the ground  | e. sole        |
| 6. A type of competition where all members of the team hit a ball from the same location for every shot | f. chili-dip   |
| 7. The flag and pole that you see on the green and in the hole  | g. mulligan    |
| 8. The green  | h. fried egg   |
| 9. A short but high golf shot that is used around the green   | i. lob         |

*Answers: 1.c 2.f 3.g 4.h 5.e 6.a 7.b 8.d 9.i*

**HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHT**

Some golfing terms have colorful stories behind them. The term bogey, which means one stroke over par, can be traced to Major Charles Wellman who played in the early 1880s in Norfolk, England. He referred to a then-current music hall song, "Hush, hush, hush. Here comes the Bogey man, he'll catch you if he can."

From that time on "Colonel Bogey" became an imaginary player held to play every hole on the course in standard stroke score. In 1895 the term was amended to mean that bogey "is not meant to be an impossible score. Rather a bogey would be a score that could be made by an ordinary player, not playing ideally well but without a single big mistake."

To really be able to understand the game of golf and its rules, it's important to have a pretty good knowledge of the language. For definitions of most of the golfing terms you should know, please consult the Glossary at the end of this book.

## Rules All Golfers Follow

Earlier in this chapter we touched on the importance of golf rules. The original rules came from the Scots and, in retrospect, what incredible foresight they had. The rules ensured that wherever golf was played, it would be played the same way. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club in Scotland and the United States Golf Association are partners in making sure the game and its great traditions continue to be upheld. The focus of both organizations is to ensure the rules do not waver. Can you imagine the chaos that would exist if the rules were subject to arbitrary interpretation? Unfortunately, many golfers think of rules as referring only to penalties, when actually using a rule may end up saving you a stroke.

## The United States Golf Association (USGA)

Dedicated to the promotion and conservation of the best interests of golf, the USGA is guided by its 16-member Executive Committee, which is the organization's policy-making board. The USGA represents more than 8,400 member clubs and courses. Thirty committees, made up of over 1,000 volunteer men and women, augment the executive committee. All of the volunteers donate their time and pay their own expenses.

Over the years the USGA slowly refines *The Rules of Golf*, which are strictly adhered to by both amateurs and professionals. The Rules are a balanced code that carefully guards the traditions of the game. Every four years, the USGA and Royal and Ancient (R&A) have a rules conference during the Walker Cup Match when it is played in Great Britain. By agreement between both organizations, this is the only time rules may be amended.

The USGA always attempts to respond to inquiries regarding the rules. Problems and situations encountered by golfers around the country are collected and published in the *Decisions on the Rules of Golf*. This annually updated book is printed and distributed by the USGA and the R&A worldwide.



## Role in Handicapping

The USGA Handicap System was established to allow golfers of different abilities to enjoy competing against each other on relatively equal terms. The system assigns a numerical handicap to a golfer based on a submitted number of scorecards. After being assigned a handicap, golfers consult their scorecard's handicap line and are allowed to deduct strokes that represent their handicap number or below. We'll look at handicaps in the next chapter.

## Why You Should Join the USGA

I hope you're beginning to understand the importance of the USGA to all of us who play golf. The USGA is also responsible for holding U.S. Open Competitions for both amateur and combined amateur and professional players. In addition, the USGA is on the forefront of improving the playing conditions for all of us. As a result of grants to various colleges and universities, new types of grass and management techniques have been developed. In all, the USGA has spent \$23 million dollars on research to improve turf for golf.

You will enjoy *Golf Journal*, the USGA Publication. Golf House, located in Far Hills, New Jersey, is a must-see if you're in the New York–New Jersey area. The museum contains artifacts and memorabilia tracing the history of the game from its origins to the present. Over 8,000 books dedicated to golf comprise the library.

More than 740,000 people are members of the USGA. Arnold Palmer has served as National Chairman since the program's inception. You can contact the USGA for more information on becoming a member by calling them at 800-223-0041 or by contacting their Web site: <http://www.usga/index.html>.

## Golf Etiquette for 2000 and Beyond

In the new millennium, golf will face incredible opportunities and challenges. The sport is booming: More and more people are taking up the game. As a result, the traditions of the sport may be tested as never before. How we dress, behave, and play the game will be the determining factors if we are to take our place in golf's history in a positive way.

How we dress is a very important part of golf etiquette. It's a courtesy to others that we dress comfortably—but not in a sloppy manner. Most golf facilities request (and some require) that a collared shirt be worn. The length of shorts, if that's your preference, also has certain required measurements. You'll encounter dress codes like this at most private clubs.

Look at dress codes in a positive light. They help preserve important elements of the ambiance of the game. Just as the USGA staunchly maintains *The Rules of Golf*, all of us should do our very best to keep the game on the highest level possible. Relax a rule here and there and, before you know it, the sport will never be the same.

### **Let's All Help Eliminate Slow Play**

If you watch the pros on TV, you may pick up the impression that you have an unlimited amount of time to hit a shot or play the round. You watch them walk back and forth on the green, reading the putt from every conceivable angle. It seems they take countless practice strokes before finally making the putt. Realizing the wrong impression this slow play is fostering in the mind of the golfer/viewer, the PGA Tour is confronting the problem head-on. Pros who are playing slowly are warned by the PGA and penalized for slow play.

Why can't you just take as much time as you want? Think of it in these terms: Slow play means fewer people will have an opportunity to play each day. With so many new players looking for tee times, slow play creates a bottleneck of frustration. I'm not saying you should rush, but strive for a round that takes no more than four and a half hours maximum. I wish you could cut it to four, but players in front of you play a big role. All of us can, and must, do our best to eliminate slow play. Here's a couple of ways you can speed up the game without affecting your concentration.

## **Brad's Rx for Curing Slow Play**

1. Always play Ready Golf. Be prepared to hit your shot when it's your turn. As soon as you reach your ball, start gathering all the information you need such as the yardage to the hole and wind direction. Decide on a club, take your practice swings, and be ready to hit when it's your turn.
2. If you're walking, go directly to your ball or get as close to it as you can without affecting any golfer who is behind you. A common cause of slow play is a group of golfers walking en masse to each ball instead of each player walking toward his or her own. You can talk to each other between holes or at other convenient times.
3. If you're riding in a cart, the golfer who is the farthest away from the hole should be dropped off with several clubs. It doesn't make a difference who the designated driver is.
4. If you were riding in a cart and were the first to play your shot, start walking toward your partners so they won't have to drive all the way back to pick you up.
5. Limit the amount of time you search for a lost ball. If a partner has to return to the tee to hit another ball, it's okay to hit your shot rather than wait for him or her to re-hit and then come back to the second ball.
6. Don't play a second ball just because you may have hit a bad shot.
7. If the group behind you is playing faster and you have an open hole ahead of your group, please invite them to play through.
8. Let's all become guardians of the game as we work with each other to ensure golf's future. Remember, I'm not suggesting you rush—just be ready to hit your ball when it's your turn.

## **Let's All Leave the Course in Better Shape Than We Found It**

My friend and co-writer Steve Hosid learned to play golf in a very special way. His teacher, golf pro Augie Nordone, believed junior players should learn about etiquette and how to take care of the course before he would teach them how to hit the ball.

For the first several lessons, Steve was taught correctly how to repair ball marks on the greens, how to replace divots on the fairways, and how to behave on the course. Only when Augie was satisfied that Steve could be a golfer who would leave the course in better shape than he found it did he actually teach him how to play.

## **If Arnold Palmer Can Do It—So Can I**

While growing up in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, Arnold Palmer's father, Deacon Palmer, did an excellent job of teaching young Arnie how to take care of the golf course. I've played with him many times and also watched him play hundreds of rounds. To this day, he still goes out of his way to pick up a piece of paper, a blowing paper cup, or even someone's carelessly left cigarette butt. Many times, in fact, after 18 holes of golf his caddie's golf cart looks as if it could use two large plastic bags to unload all the things Arnold picked up off the course during the round.

Leaving the course in better shape than you found it should be a goal for all serious golfers. You may not financially own the course but, spiritually, all of us do. If we all treated the course in this way, think of the positive effect it would have. Nothing is worse than walking onto a green and seeing a fresh ball mark that someone selfishly didn't take the time to fix. All too often you will find unrepaired ball marks on every green. Why not be a guardian of the game and fix a few while you're waiting to putt?

## **Correctly Repairing Divots and Ball Marks**

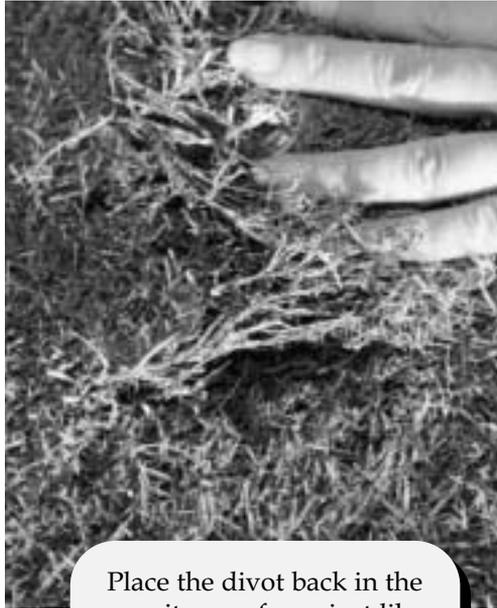
Here's how to repair a fairway divot and fix a ball mark on the green. Opportunities for both always happen during the normal course of play.

## Fairway Divots

Sometimes a player removes a section of turf while making the shot. This is normal.



To correctly replace a fairway divot, locate the piece of turf that flew away as you hit your ball.



Place the divot back in the area it came from, just like fitting a puzzle piece. The grass is still alive and will continue to grow.



On some golf courses, a sand and seed mixture is provided on your golf cart. Use the mixture to fill in the still bare section of the divot area.

## Ball Marks

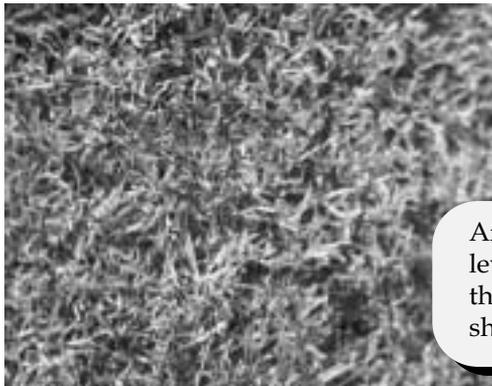
Walk on any green and you will see ball marks that have been thoughtlessly left unrepaired. Some marks are also the result of golfers trying to repair the green but not knowing how to correctly do it.



This is a ball mark. Properly fixed, it will heal itself in a very short time.



Insert a pronged divot repair tool around the outside of the ball mark, gently pushing the damaged portion of the green toward the center of the mark.



After you gently push the high area down and level it with your putter, the indentation caused by the ball is gone. The green will repair itself in a short time thanks to your help.

## Brad's Tips for All Golfers

1. We're all part of golf's history.
2. Let's all work together to eliminate slow play.
3. Leave the golf course in better shape than you found it.

