

The Rules Applied – September '23

Handicaps. If we're getting strokes, we love them. If we're giving strokes . . . not so much. Overall, the handicap system seems to work, as you can see in our tournaments, which are won by low, middle and high handicappers. But the system only works when scores are properly posted. To do this, you need to correctly record (and adjust) your scores, and then you must post all "acceptable" scores.

Okay, so what is an acceptable score? This applies to most formats where you play your own ball – tournaments or general play, even Stableford tournaments (although you would post a normal score, not the Stableford score); it even applies to match play. (Rules of Handicapping, 2.1.)

How about scrambles? No. Shambles? No. Alternate shot? You're being ridiculous. *How about the 4-club tournament?* No, if you are not playing your own ball, or if you are restricted in the number of clubs you can use, then the score should not be posted.

Any other requirements? The round must be played in accordance with the Rules of Golf, with one other person present. In general play, a player may follow a model rule of golf (a rule which may or may not be put into play, in the discretion of the tournament organizer), even if it has not officially been put in place.

Okay, now what do you mean by correctly record and adjust scores? (1) if you play out the hole, you should record your actual score. This may be essential in a tournament. But when posting your score, you will reduce it to a maximum of net double bogey (that is, double bogey plus any strokes you get because of your handicap). So, if your handicap is 15, then you get a stroke on Hole 5 at DeBell; your maximum score on that hole is then 7 (double bogey + 1). In a tournament, if your actual score was 9, then you would write 9 on your card; but for posting purposes, that score would be adjusted to a 7. (2) If you do not play a hole (perhaps due to darkness, or in match play, if your match ended early), then you record your score as net par (par, +1 if you get a stroke, or +2 if you get two strokes). (3) If you play a hole but do not finish it, then record the score you most likely would have gotten, but not more than the maximum score. (Eg, if you are lying 3, and a 2-footer is conceded, you'll record a 4; if a 20-footer is conceded, you'll probably assume 2 putts and record a 5. (Rules of Handicapping 3.1, 3.2, 3.3.)

What if I play only a few holes? You would not post only a few holes. But you can post a 9-hole score, if you play at least 7 holes (filling in net par on 8 and 9). If you played 13 holes, you would disregard any scores on 10-13, and post a 9-hole score. If you play at least 14 holes, you would post an 18-hole score, filling in the necessary net pars.

So, do I always post my score? In tournaments (other than match play), the club will post your score, if appropriate to do so. (Eg, not in a scramble.) If you do not

complete a hole, put an X on your card. In addition, if you X out a hole, be sure to write in the score that you most likely would have made, so that it can be accurately posted. Thus, in a partner better ball competition, if your partner birdies a par 4, then you might want to X out the hole and move on. But if you had only 2 feet for par, you should write X4 on your card, so that we can post a correct score for you.