

October CWGA Article

Pace of Play

My husband came from a golfing family. His home growing up was at the top of a hill overlooking the 6th green of a country club, that his father helped to build in south central Pennsylvania. He began playing golf at a very young age and played through high school and college. While I never played until I was much older, I remember walking tournaments with my in-laws who taught me the rules and etiquette of play. No talking while someone is hitting. The person with the lowest score on the last hole tees off first on the next hole. The person whose ball is farthest away from the hole hits and putts first. Where golfers should stand and where golfers should not stand when playing with a group, just to name a few. Some would say that the “old school” etiquette of play can be contrary to the phrase “pace of play”. To say my husband is old school when it comes to golf would be an understatement. Since he is a great golfer, his pace of play is well within the time frame suggested, so I understand when he tells me that he is not a big fan of some of the etiquette changes that have surfaced under how to speed up the pace of play.

In our club we follow the suggestions for “ready golf” and periodically time our rounds to see if we are within the time frame allotted. There is a notion that female golfers are slower than their male counterparts. The reasons may be based the false assumptions that pace of play is related to skill level or how far you hit the ball or that women talk more on the course therefore slowing the pace. However, the data that we have collected, which includes having our members write on their score card the time they start and the time they finish, supports the notion that CWGA overall is doing a great job keeping up with the suggested pace of play. Staying aware and being focused on the game, being prepared with which club you are going to hit, systematically placing your golf cart so that you can move to the next shot, limiting practice strokes are some of the strategies we instill in our club members. That being said, there is always room for improvement. We are committed to doing everything we can to help our group, especially new members, understand the importance of our role in keeping play moving. This may include activities during orientation in the Spring that include understanding the course as well providing opportunity for growth and improvement. Next year our club plans to offer mini clinics and lessons to cover a range of topics and skills available to all members.

While we are all committed to improving skills and pace of play, it is important for our club to communicate some of our observations to better educate all about some of the assumptions one might have regarding our role on the topic of pace of play. One interesting side observation that was documented during a time when we were timing our rounds, is that before CWGA begins our tee times (8:29) on our play days, there are public golfers already out on the golf course. On numerous occasions, our first group has had to wait on the early bird public foursomes who are ahead of us. Of course, we all know that any group who is slow can back up an entire tournament, which is exactly what happened. So, when the last group of the CWGA tournament finishes in more than suggested time, we may need to investigate the cause of the slow pace.

My husband is a very patient and easy-going person. On a recent round of golf, we were paired with two lovely, but very slow, elderly gentlemen (way older than us, and we are elderly). My husband carries his clubs (I told you he is "old school"!), and we both walk the course. The pair that joined us were in a cart. It took us 3 hours to play 8 holes. We let several groups play through. These two gentlemen loved to talk and told us their life story. At one hole, one of the men changed his mind four times before he decided on a club and then took six practice swings. On another hole they pulled up to one of their balls' and sat in the cart while the player who should have been hitting, lit a cigar. These are just a few examples of what caused a slower than normal pace of play at every hole. Needless to say, the situation was tense for me while my husband put his arm around me and told me to relax. The pair we were teamed up with stopped playing after 8 holes, one of them had an appointment. I guess my point is while pace of play is important, sometimes we all need to all relax, recognize what we are not able to control, figure out how not to hold up other players by letting them play through, and enjoy the game.

One event that might help us all to speed up our play occurs on October 3rd as we participate in a "Cheers to 50 Years" Staggette which will include a Horse Race (golf, of course!) and lots of fun! Hope to see you there!