

## Caddyshack III: the boys on the bag come back

The crusade to recruit a greater number of junior golfers is going strong. The First Tee and other programs around the country are steadily bringing more kids out to play. But there's another way to encourage youngsters to take up the game, and it's one that gets short shrift. I speak of caddies.

For decades, the caddyshack crew of high school and college kids was a golf course fixture. But motorized golf cars pretty much spelled doom for caddies, and with their demise, golf lost something important.



Jay Finegan, editor

"We think caddying provides great mentoring for kids," says Dave Norman, executive director of the Virginia State Golf Association (VSGA). "It's an opportunity for kids to be with respectable people on the golf course. It gives them contacts in the community. Also, it helps them develop knowledge of the game and a love for it."

### THE 'CORPS OF CADDIES'

That was definitely true in my case. The summer I was 14, my mom dropped me off every morning at a local country club. The caddyshack was ruled by a retired Army drill sergeant who called us his "corps of caddies."

As a rookie, I knew nothing about the game. Consequently, I was purely a pack animal on the course. When a member asked me which club to hit, I'd stare at the bag with no more comprehension than if he'd asked me to speak Chinese.

But caddies got to play the course on Mondays, and by that Labor Day I'd learned something about golf and was determined to stick with it. Indeed, this was a time-honored way of getting into the game. Some of golf's great-

est players - including Ben Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson - got their start in caddy yards.

Kids today don't often get the same opportunity. Of the 285 courses in Dave Norman's association, for example, only about 10 percent offer caddie programs.

### SPEEDING UP THE PACE OF PLAY

But now there are signs of a resurgence. According to *The Golf Insider*, a travel newsletter, the best golf trend of 2000 was the return of the caddie. Numerous high-end resort courses now make caddies "inclusive" - their pay is included in the green fee.

Even some public courses, such as the new Lost Canyons complex near Los Ange-

building private clubs," Granuzzo says. "They want the best high-end golf experience, and caddies are synonymous with that."

Some of Caddie Master's client courses have 150 to 300 caddies, including lawyers, doctors, accountants, military personnel, college students and teachers. "It comes down to a love of the game," says Granuzzo. "It's good physical exercise and in most cases you get playing privileges."

### A TANGIBLE ADVANTAGE

"From the standpoint of the escalating price of golf," Granuzzo adds, "these high-end clubs are being challenged to add value while they add rate. Some of these courses are next door to each other, and they're all seeking a competitive advantage. They want something that can't easily be duplicated, so they're turning to personal service. And the only vehicle left out there is a caddie program.

"From a positioning standpoint, it's fantastic," he adds. "With a caddie providing local knowledge on a tough course, you can save



Caddies employed by Caddie Master sport uniforms.

a lot of balls and as much as an hour." **START SLOW, GROW SLOW**

After eight years at the helm of Caddie Master, Granuzzo has some advice for clubs looking to establish their own programs: start small and promote heavily.

"Start with five caddies, not 15," he says. "Get them steady work. And promote, promote, promote - in the club newsletter, through postings in the locker room and, most importantly, behind the counter in the

Continued on next page

## Emphasize attitude over skills in hiring strategy

By HARRIS M. PLOTKIN

A few months ago, I gave a talk at the GCSAA conference in Dallas. I have given this talk - "Taking the Guesswork Out of Hiring" - for over 25 years to a variety of organizations, including virtually every type of golf association.

Over the years, we have helped several thousand clients do a better job of identifying applicants to get the right person into the right job, and with the right attitude. We have learned quite a bit about what our clients are looking for in a good front-line employee.

For the most part, too many clients have been hiring the wrong type of people because they have emphasized the need for skills and experience. In front-line employees, attitude is more important than skills and experience. Will they show up every day? Will they work hard? Will they be nice to customers, members or their guests? Can they get along with their coworkers?

### NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

I was planning to give the superintendents my usual talk - that it is more important to hire for attitude and aptitude than it is for skills and experience. You can teach most people how to set a table, how to cut grass, how to do the basic things so that they learn the skills and eventually gather experience. But try to teach someone to have a better attitude. If you have raised children or have a significant other, you know what I'm talking about.

To make sure I wasn't steering them wrong, I spent several hours in the exhibit hall interviewing all the major equipment

manufacturers, especially those whose equipment looked complicated.

In interviewing these folks, here's what I found out:

- Every salesman or engineer that I talked to, except one, said that if you can drive a car you can drive any of their equipment.
- It would take no more than 30 minutes to an hour to train anybody how to operate their equipment.
- One gentleman said it would require eight hours to train someone to operate his equipment.
- Some provided videos to show how their equipment works, so superintendents could train their people by simply showing them the video and discussing it with them.
- Some provided training material in Spanish. Most of them didn't have it, but said they could provide it.
- Besides training them, the equipment salespeople said it would be useful if the superintendent also went out with them for a few hours to make sure they were using the equipment properly. He could also show them how he wants the greens cut or the fairways seeded, and so on.

What does this tell you? It's obvious. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to learn how to operate this equipment. You can teach almost anybody what is important in an hour, and then spend a few hours on the course to show them how you want it done.

Therefore, in lieu of skills and experience, it is more important to hire someone with a great attitude, who will be there for you day after day, do a workman like job, and get along with everybody they encounter.

During my talk, I emphasized the use of a pre-employment attitude test that most of our golf superintendent clients use to

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Harris Plotkin

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## WIGA proposes course accessibility policy for impaired

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LOS ALTOS, Calif. — In an effort to reduce the increasing abuse of the current medical or "red flag" system used by golf courses to identify disabled golfers, the Walking Impaired Golfer's Association of America (WIGA) is proposing a new set of rules that would better identify those with walking impairments.

WIGA decided that a rule change was in order after its 2000 study showed that 81 percent of golf courses surveyed said that they needed a system to identify golfers with walking impairments. (See chart)

"The red-flag system was discriminatory against the golfer with walking impairments," said Fred Montgomery, chairman of WIGA. "Those using the red flag could be some-

avoid all wet and restricted areas.

The new blue flag proposed by WIGA would identify the golfer with severe walking impairments who cannot walk 50 yards, cumulative. The blue-flagged carts would be able to drive to the ball on any fairway using the 90-degree rule, making the effort to use cart paths wherever possible. The golfer must, however, remain five yards from all bunkers and a minimum of five yards from putting surface and greenside bunkers and must avoid wet areas.

Under the new rules, use of adaptive golf carts will be limited to those who are unable to walk and/or stand while playing golf. The cart will be allowed to drive anywhere on the golf course, including accessible bunkers and putting surfaces.

According to Montgomery, golf courses should expect golfers with walking impairments to complete their rounds in a time similar to the times of able-bodied golfers.

### FORMALIZING THE RULES

WIGA, which does golf course accessibility surveys for golf courses in terms of ADA requirements, has already introduced the two flag system at all four courses at Pebble Beach.

Montgomery also presented his proposal at the National Forum for Accessible Golf at Clemson University in April and hopes that this will be the first step to the nationwide implementation of the new rules. "I have been inundated with requests for information," he said. "Course operators and superintendents are looking for a solution that reduces the abuse of the red-flag system while providing for the needs of walking impaired golfers."

### GOLF COURSE ACCESSIBILITY STUDY

- NEED A SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY GOLFERS WITH WALKING IMPAIRMENTS:  
DEFINITELY YES - 81 PERCENT  
DON'T REALLY KNOW - 19 PERCENT
- AWARE OF HOW ADA LAW AFFECTS YOUR FACILITY:  
YES - 28.6 PERCENT  
NO - 71.4 PERCENT
- UNDERSTAND THAT "TOTAL ACCESS" INCLUDES GREENS  
YES - 38 PERCENT  
NO - 61.9 PERCENT

Source: 2000 WIGA survey

### SEEING RED AND BLUE

The new rules introduced by WIGA would create a two-tiered system of red and blue flags as well as rules governing the use of adaptive golf carts.

The red flag would represent golfers with moderate walking impairments who can walk a minimum of 50 yards and comply with course rules applicable to red flag use. A red-flagged cart would be able to drive to the ball in the fairway (turf conditions permitting) using the 90-degree rule. The cart must also remain on cart paths around all tees and greens, 50 yards from the front of the putting surface, five yards from the edge of all fairway bunkers, and it must

## Boys on the bag

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pro shop."

As those five caddies improve and word spreads, so does demand.

"Don't overreact," Granuzzo cautions. "Instead of five, maybe you need six or seven. Just add one or two at a time. If you recruit 10 and only have demand for six, you've got to split up the work too much. You dilute the talent pool.

"That makes the customer experience worse, which negates demand," he adds. "It's a negative vortex, and you end up losing everybody. But when you start slow and grow slow, you'll be able to figure out what kind of program your club can support."

### CADDIE STARTING TIMES

Dave Norman adds another bit of wisdom. He plans to launch a caddie training program next summer at Independence Golf Club, a VSGA-owned complex in Richmond. It will focus on youths age 14 to 21.

Norman knows the major pitfalls of caddie programs.

"When caddies sit around all day and never get a loop, they get disillusioned," he says. "We propose to tackle that by having caddie starting times. If you book during those times, you'd have to take a caddie.

"We'd run those between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. and between 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. on weekends. The caddies could go out twice," he explains. "With a system like that, they know they'll get a bag. We'll also provide forecaddies if the players prefer to ride."

Norman hopes to make his caddie training program a statewide resource. "We want to offer caddies at our member clubs," he says, "because we feel it's an integral part of the game. It helps the local employment scene. And it's a great way to get kids involved in golf." ■

## Hiring

Continued from previous page

judge whether an individual is dependable, hard working, flexible and service-oriented. Most clients use that and, in addition, some also use our "honesty test." However, I don't see honesty as an issue for most golf course maintenance employees.

Another very good way to screen out people, and save yourself a lot of time and trouble, is to ask that person to meet you at 5 a.m. at the cart barn, or wherever the superintendent's office is located.

Emphasize that if the job candidate is one minute late, you are not going to hire him.

That way, you will

quickly find out those who can get up early enough to come to work at 5 a.m., and how much they want that job. That, in addition to checking references, and using good, validated legal tests to determine other characteristics that are important to you, would substantially reduce the high turnover that golf course superintendents have been having over the years. ■

*Harris (Hank) Plotkin is the author of "Building A Winning Team," and creator of the "Above and Beyond" customer-service training program designed exclusively for the club industry. He is the founder of The Plotkin Group, a 33-year-old management consulting and training firm.*



### MAILBAG

#### IS PURGATORY LONGEST COURSE?

Dear Golf Course News,

I read each issue with interest and pleasure, as I find your coverage to be the broadest in the industry. I did, however, stop short when I arrived at the story about Purgatory Golf Club, which characterized it as "the longest course east of the Mississippi."

I believe the International, in Bolton, Mass., holds that distinction at 8,325 yards from the back tees. Of course, its par is 77 from that set of tees. The next set measures 7,200 to 7,300. Since you didn't mention the par at Purgatory,

I may well be splitting hairs, but I didn't want our New England course to go unrecognized.

Sincerely,  
Arthur Little  
Proprietor, Province Lake GC  
South Effingham, N.H.

#### GEOGRAPHY LESSON

Greetings:

I read your interesting story in the March issue. This article discusses Total Golf adding three courses in Michigan, my home state. I've played these courses and they are very nice, especially in the fall season, with the colors on the trees. However, these courses and the Leelanau Peninsula are not in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, as the article notes. They do sit on a peninsula on the western side of the state amongst many apple orchards and naturally, surrounded by water on three sides. There are many courses in upper Michigan, which is a peninsula in its own right, but not the courses mentioned in your article. Just thought I'd pass along that little tid-bit of information and correction. I like your publication and find it very interesting reading.

Best Regards,  
Mike Schultz, Eagle Eye Golf Associates

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