

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

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

Boys on the bag

Continued from previous page

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.



EVERGREEN™ The Turf Blanket the World Relies On

- Earlier spring green-up
- Faster seed germination
- Deeper root development
- Delays dormancy in fall
- Ideal winter blanket
- Best for quick turf repairs
- Available in any size
- 3 or 7 year warranty covers

CALL TOLL FREE
1-800-387-5808

COVERMASTER™
COVERMASTER
COVERMASTER
MASTERS IN THE ART OF SPORTS SURFACE COVERS

WEB: www.covermaster.com
E-MAIL: info@covermaster.com

COVERMASTER INC., REXDALE, ON, M9V 5C3 TEL 416-745-1811 FAX 416-742-6837