WIGA proposes course accessibility policy for impaired

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LOS ALTOS, Calif. — In an effort to improve the walking impairments of the Golfers’ 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.

The new blue flag proposed by WIGA would identify the golfer with severe walking impairments who cannot walk 50 yards, cumulative. The blue-flagged cart 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 surfaces 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 where on the golf course, 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 allows golf courses to access 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.”

Hiring

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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 the job. 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 32-year-old management consulting and training firm.

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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’ll 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.”

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.