The Proper Way to Repair a Ball Mark

1. Use a prolonged ball mark repair tool (preferably), knife, key or tee.
2. Insert at the edges of the mark— not the middle of the depression.
3. Bring the edges together with a gentle twisting motion, but don't lift the center. Try not to tear the grass.
4. Smooth the surface with a club or foot. You're done when it's a surface that you would putt over.

Source: Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America