



*Walking up the face of a bunker is never a good idea, particularly when there are no rakes to be found.*

## TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTE

BY ZACH NICOLUDIS | AGRONOMIST, CENTRAL REGION

Many changes have been implemented at golf courses to accommodate social distancing and reduce touch points. Included in these changes is the removal of bunker rakes. Some golf courses have reported better pace of play since the rakes were removed and improved maintenance efficiency because employees mowing rough do not have to repeatedly get off their machine to move rakes at each bunker. However, the new rake policy has led to some golfers starting to form a bad habit.

Superintendents have witnessed severe foot printing in the sand on bunker faces. It appears that a growing number of golfers are choosing to exit by walking up the steepest part of the bunkers. Under normal circumstances, golfers usually enter and exit a bunker at the same spot, which was likely the lowest point, in order to minimize the amount of raking that is necessary. Now that raking is a thing of the past, many are not retracing their steps and instead are progressing forward. While exiting a bunker up the face may offer the shortest distance for golfers to reach their ball, it is often the worst option from a maintenance standpoint. Sand on the faces is easily disturbed and is difficult to smooth and compact. In addition,

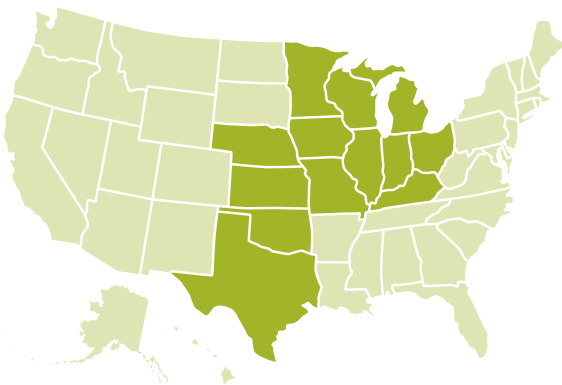
climbing up steep grass faces can easily damage turf in what is already a difficult growing environment.

Entering and exiting bunkers at the lowest point means that the sand will remain more consistent, deep footprints will be less common and employees will not have to spend as much time repairing the faces. It may require a few extra steps to take the scenic route after playing your next bunker shot, but your fellow golfers and the superintendent are sure to be thankful that you left the bunkers in the best condition possible.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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