

Green Section Record

REGIONAL UPDATE

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Removing your ball from the hole while the flagstick is in place requires a little more care to avoid damaging hole edges. (USGA/Darren Carroll)

KEEPING A SHARP EDGE

BY LARRY GILHULY | AGRONOMIST, WEST REGION

The decision to allow flagsticks to remain in when putting on the green was instituted this year in an effort to help improve pace of play. While some groups may slow down slightly because they are removing and replacing the flagstick multiple times, casual observations suggest that the majority of players are now leaving the flagstick in the hole and pace of play has been improved. However, some superintendents believe that a byproduct of this change is more damage to hole edges.

In the past, the flagstick was always removed when putting on a green. However, some players would use their putter to retrieve their golf ball from the hole. This can easily cause major damage to the edge of the hole. Based on multiple conversations with golf course superintendents, this is still occurring



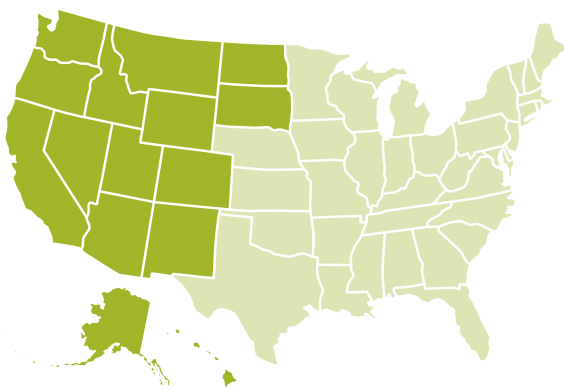
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while players are leaving the flagstick in place, causing even more damage. Fortunately, the new rules allow players to fix a damaged hole prior to playing a shot, so the minor damage to hole edges can be addressed.

Superintendents and golfers are also seeing players accidentally causing damage to the edges of the hole with their hands as they retrieve their ball with the flagstick in the hole. Being careful while removing your ball from the hole with the flagstick in place should reduce this issue.

If your golf course is seeing increased damage around the holes, the first step is [educating golfers about the damage they can cause](#). Greater awareness will allow golfers to keep a sharp eye on keeping a sharp edge.



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