



The right focus

John Walsh's editorial, "Focus on opportunities" (August issue, page 6), hits the nail on the head. I deal with two golf courses that suffer horribly from the lack of conditions he outlines as the two key characteristics for success – great course conditions and attentive customer service.

The course where I'm employed has fantastic conditioning – from all the feedback I've received – but poor service. A resort where I consult has poor conditioning and terrible service. I'm trying to solve the problems at both places, but these situations are more complicated than can be addressed in this space. I'm in a pivotal position at both places to implement change and am working to do so.

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Slow play

For years I've been saying that we're walking into rounds of golfers who learned the tempo of play by watching pro golf Sunday afternoon on television ("Dying a slow death," August, page 74). I'm a marshal at Stanford University Golf Course, and I see this all the time.

Several years ago, when Tiger Woods was still at Stanford, I was asked to drive his father, Earl, around following Tiger's group. Earl quietly mumbled about the slowness of play. Oh, did he ever. Finally, on a par-5 16th hole, the players were looking for yardage markers, eyeballing their second shot, checking the markers again, eyeballing some more, when Earl shouted at them: "Just hit the goddamn thing!"

Ted Bache
Marshal
Stanford University Golf Course
Stanford, Calif.

Pat Jones' writing about slow play ("Dying a slow death," August, page 74) is on the money when he says five-hour-plus rounds are taking away from golf courses.

Our course is consistently trying to improve pace of play by training player assistants to help golfers move faster rather

than say, "You're falling behind, and we need you to pick up the pace." We've tried giving away free beer to those who finish in a recommended time, but to be honest, all that did was give our early morning players, who finish in less than four hours anyway, a free beer. It also made customers playing later in the day even more upset about their slow pace because they'd been held up by slow players and didn't finish within the recommended time.

We're finding a slow player is a slow player. It's easy to slow someone down but difficult to speed him up. It's frustrating for our staff to know that when Mr. Smith tees it up every Saturday at 7:15 a.m. he's going to hold up the course with his slow play unless we help him move faster throughout his entire round. We also have families who seem to never have played before or maybe not since Arnie's prime.

Presently, we run seven and eight minute times with starter times booked every other hour to help space groups out. We're considering spreading out our tee times. One reason for us leaving intervals this way is that if we have 100 rounds or 200 rounds it could take the same five hours to play because of one or two slow groups.

The bottom line is that we don't want to die the slow death. If we can get our pace of play at its slowest period to be around 4.5 hours, then we'll be capable of fixing any course's pace-of-play nightmare.

Donn Hess
Head golf professional
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I loved Pat Jones' article, "Dying a slow death," in the August issue (page 74). I've always wondered when this silly game people play will die out soon and why they pay us so much to provide an area for adults to play. Additionally, I wonder when I'm going to call my green chairman to tell him we can't cut greens anymore because there's no more fuel.

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