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NEED FOR SPEED

At the USGA's annual meeting a few months ago, it was announced that it will begin addressing pace of play, not only in their own events (good luck with that!), but down at our level, too. Along with many new programs to educate golfers (watch for another scintillating series of advertisements), the USGA said the Green Section will work with clubs to find ways to prepare courses to encourage faster play.

Hold on a second. I take a back seat to no one in my distaste for slow play. I'll support any good ideas that tackle the problem and will offer some down below. But you and I and everyone else with a pulse know where slow play is worst: On the pro tours, which we watch every week on television.

PGA and LPGA Tour players are so methodical and deliberate, it's painful to watch. Yet, we copy them.

Most of us have neither the ability nor the reason to spend 60 seconds lining up a two-foot putt. I don't think the pros really do either, but they do and likely will continue to. So I'd like to propose that the pros stand up and say, "Don't play like us. When you are ready to play, play. You're not playing for thousands of dollars, this isn't your livelihood, it's supposed to be fun. So please, don't copy us, but play faster."

It won't happen, but it'd be a start.

As for the USGA attempting to tackle this disease, I'd hope our national governing body has more important issues than how fast the 20-handicapper is playing. But if we agree slow play sucks, I suggest we help in this endeavor.

Here are some suggestions to superintendents, architects and golfers on how they can speed up the game.

FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Set up your course to suit your

clientele. You know who they are, you know how they play. Help them out.

- Go easy on US Open-quality hole locations and roughs. Do Pebble Beach, Bethpage, or Pinehurst cut the holes, or cut the rough, the other 51 weeks of the year the way they do that one week, every six or seven years, they host the Open? For that matter, do Winged Foot, Shinnecock, and Olympic keep their courses Open-tough for their members?

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- Watch your green speeds.
- Be mindful of hole locations on busy days (weekends, holidays, etc.)
- Align tee markers to the intended target
- Proper tee time interval spacing
- Widen fairways as much as you can without destroying the course's architectural integrity
- Increase/fix draining in landing zones so balls and carts don't plug
- Don't make bunker sand too soft (select the proper sand particles so balls don't bury) and reduce/remove the silly ornamental grasses, too.
- Make the course firmer and drier. It will play faster
- Check tree placement. Don't have trees between bunkers and the next landing zone, including greens
- No long, forced carries from tee to fairway (especially middle and for-

ward tees). Don't grow native areas or place water in front of teeing grounds

- Limit the height of primary rough. Research indicates just 3/4-of-an-inch affects a ball's spin rate
- Appropriately placed rest room facilities; especially for women players.

FOR COURSE ARCHITECTS

- Build for the expected clientele
- Do we really need 8,000-yard courses? Par 4s longer than 500 yards? A course of 6,300 yards is more than enough for the vast majority of real golfers
- Two or three teeing grounds per hole is enough. More than that gives the golfer too many choices, and the choice he makes is usually the wrong – and long – one
- Don't over-bunker, don't put water in front of tees, don't put water in front of greens on par 3s and par 5s
- The distance between a green and the next tee should not be more than 100 yards
- Place cart paths on the right side of the hole, especially the 1st and 10th holes, since 90 percent of all golfers fade/slice the ball
- Avoid wildly sloping, overly contoured putting surfaces where even an "average" green speed will lead to three- and four-putting
- Go easy on the blind shots
- Go easy on bunkers, too, but place some in strategic areas to stop balls from running into woods, water, and other hard-to-retrieve areas
- Appropriately placed rest rooms

FOR GOLFERS

- Play "ready golf." Hit it, find it, and hit it again
- If someone in your group is slow, tell him. And don't perpetuate his slowness by waiting. When you're

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ready to hit, hit!

- Get off your cell phone
- Practice on the range, not the course. And those five practice swings before each shot don't help
- Mulligans? Extra shots through the green? Certainly not if anyone is waiting. And even if they're not waiting. Don't
- When it comes to choosing which tees to play, leave your ego in the car and play to your skill level. And even then, "playing it forward" is always a smart idea
- If you must use a rangefinder or GPS, do it quickly and appropriately: It doesn't help on a shot less than 60 yards
- Plumb-bobbing and walking around the hole checking the breaks isn't necessary to make your two-footer for a 7
- Rake footprints when leaving a bunker
- Fix ball marks on the green
- Park your cart or place your bag or trolley on the side of the green closest to the next tee
- Be honest with yourself. Know and accept your limitations. You'll play better and have more fun
- Understand the biggest reason for slow play among us 20 handicappers is the \$5.00 golf ball

If we all do our part, the USGA can concentrate on its core competencies: the Rules of Golf, conducting national championships, and causing/settling equipment controversies. **GCI**

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Like many diseases, anthracnose thrives in extended moist conditions.

Keeping in mind the needs of the turf and considering those needs to adjust your fertility, irrigation and soil management practices appropriately in a timely manner will in fact greatly reduce your chances of anthracnose. If you have a chronic and recurring condition for Anthracnose development, take a strong look at your

soil profile, your cultural practices, your irrigation management and of course your fertility program. If following the sound practice of applying nutrients foliarly in addition to key granular applications, insure that your foliar program is in fact a foliar one and that your droplets are covering the leaves effectively. This will aid in not only your fertility program but in pesticide applications, as well.

If pesticide applications are necessary, speak with your colleagues in your regions about what is working for them as that is probably the most effective advice you will receive. In addition, follow key research coming out of universities like Penn State, N.C. State and Rutgers in particular that have done a lot of work in Anthracnose control methods. But always remember that universities can never match your conditions or stresses, so use the research as a guideline to finding a program that works best for you... and always follow label recommendations. **GCI**

Carmen Magro, MBA, CGCS, is the founder and chief agronomist of Agronomy Management Solutions, and a frequent GCI contributor.

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