How To Avoid Accidents On the Golf Course

MORE than 10,000 golfers, caddies and club personnel will be injured this year on America's 5,000-plus golf courses.

According to a recent study of golfing accidents by the Institute For Safer Living of the American Mutual Liability Insurance Co., the game is producing an average of two serious accidents per year per course. Rarely a day passes on any course when there are not one or more "nearsies" and "almosts" any one of which could easily result in a bad injury.

The points often overlooked by golfers, says the Institute, are that a driven golf ball travels better than 250 miles per hour and that a swung golf club speeds through its arc at a rate of 200 miles per hour. They discount the dangers of lightning, heat prostration, and sunstroke, and ignore the hazards of motor vehicles as they cross roads running through the course.

Most frequent cause of trouble is the golf ball itself, a hard shelled object that becomes a dangerous missile in flight. Damaged and lost eyesight, broken bones and concussions, resulting from being hit by a golf ball, appeared often in the survey. This hazard can be removed in two ways: Wait until the foursome ahead is out of range before you drive. Make sure the caddy who is shagging balls has the sun behind him so that he can see the driven ball as it comes at him.

Practice swings on the tee were shown to be the cause of many accidents, and in nearly all cases serious injury.

Getting struck by lightning while on the golf course was not a frequent occurrence. Yet, in more than 150 instances it struck down players and caddies, and in at least half the cases caused death. The Institute advises players to get off the course during a thunder storm. Don't stand under a tree. Don't rely on shelters. Best precaution, next to getting into your automobile, is to stand among many trees.

At least 500 golf course accidents resulted from players or caddies being hit by motor vehicles driving through the club grounds. Players and caddies make the mistake of feeling sure that the car driver is looking out for them and will give them the right of way. Courtesy, says the Institute, is the surest cure for golfing accidents. Watch out for the other players. Make sure where they are before you drive, before you swing a golf club.