

Is there anything more perplexing than the exaggerated influence that good players have on design and maintenance? Amazingly, most golfers treat the opinions of pros and single-digit handicappers as if their views were born out of thoughtful research and calculated reason.

However, simply because these people can play golf well doesn't necessarily mean they have a clue about what's good for the game. But since no kind soul has the heart to tell this to their faces, it's time for this soul to speak up. So, here are the 10 stupid things good players do to mess up golf (hint: stick this page on the driving range machine where they're most likely to see it):

1. Scratch golfers believe "a good but fair test" of their game equals great design.

In other words, if they play well, they like the architecture. If they don't play up to their standards or the course doesn't "fit their games," then either the architect is a hack or the superintendent is doing a lousy job.

2. Good players believe it's their right to play 18 holes without having to think.

"It's unfair that the committee moved the markers up six yards for the final round. Nobody warned me!" Or, "I hit it down the center and could not attack the pin, while Norbert hit it down the left side and had a better angle in. That's unfair design!" No, Norbert used his brain. Try it sometime; you might like it. Of course, then you might not be such a good player anymore.

3. Good players think every course should be set up like a U.S. Open course.

A great "test" has 25-yard-wide fairways, deep rough and perfect lies in the hazards. Tell me, good player: When you were in school, were tests great because they were so difficult? Or was a class memorable because the teacher made it interesting?

4. Good players analyze the design merits of a hole based on handicapping.

"In my regular game, I have to give up a stroke to Smails, and I don't think it's the four-handicap hole. Isn't there something we can do to strengthen this hole?" Yes, and make sure to leave an address so we know where to send the Open Doctor's invoice.

10 Things Players Do to Mess Up Golf

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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5. Good players expect hazards to be fair all of the time.

They know when a bunker is poorly placed (because it's in their way), and they always think bunkers should be deeper to penalize hacks. "I *actually* saw a 22-handicapper *actually* get up and down from there last week," a disappointed good golfer said to his playing partner. Oh, the world can be such a cruel place.

6. Proficient golfers think short grass around greens is a bad thing.

That's because it makes them consider multiple possibilities with those pesky shots to the putting service. Worse, with short grass approaches or chipping areas, bad players can occasionally putt from off of the green — another crime against humanity.

7. Scratch golfers believe they should be able to hit drivers on every hole.

If they can't, then it's the result of faulty design or a lousy course setup.

8. Good players are experts on all aspects of course maintenance.

They know all about particle sizes, percolation rates and proper bunker-raking techniques to prevent the end of the world as they know it: the bad lie in a bunker.

9. Good golfers want a road map to the green.

A golf hole is only good if they can stand on the tee and know all its secrets before they tee off. If there are subtle design quirks, they had better be warned. Otherwise, someone did not do his job.

10. Did I mention . . . scratch golfers believe their ability to break 90, 80 or 70 automatically means their thoughts on design and maintenance are divinely profound? Sadly, too many of us actually support them in this delusion.

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