

I was cruising around the course the other day, scouting for signs of disease or insect activity, and I wondered, "Just how many real signs are out on the course with actual words on them, in plain view, that the golfer's don't see? And why exactly can't they see them?"

I think every golfer under the sun has read at least a million times that they should repair their ball marks and replace their divots. Or that their golf cars should go here and not there, or that they should allow faster golfers to play through. So I ask you why, then, are these things not taking place?

My solution? Better sign verbiage. My theory is if you can say the same thing in a new and creative way, it just may be what's needed to make people notice. So let's edit. Take, for example, a sign that anyone who has ever gripped a club has probably read more than once:

REPLACE DIVOTS AND REPAIR BALL-MARKS

Obviously that doesn't seem to have the desired effect, so we'll start in with the begging: *PLEASE replace your divots, etc. ...*

Alas, unrepaired ballmarks seem to multiply on our greens, and unreplaced divots still dot our fine fairways.

The typical everyday signs just don't do the trick anymore, and I think it's partly because of complacency. When golfers first learned the game, these things were a very important part of their training.

Then, as their games started improving, they found "The Zone." The obvious upside of The Zone is the improvement in their game. The downside is the resulting tunnel-vision and hard focus that replaces common sense. I don't know how many times I've come across someone I've known all my life who's out playing golf, gone up to say hello, and they look at me as if I was trying to sell them earthquake insurance.

So what we need to do with our signage is to get creative. Make our signs 'Zone Breakers,' even if it's only for a second.

For divots — *STOMPING ON THE BARE EARTH WHERE PERFECTLY GOOD TURFGRASS HAD BEEN GROWING AN INSTANT BEFORE YOU EXCAVATED IT WITH YOUR WEDGE DOES*

Golfers Render A Sign of the Times

BY JIM BLACK



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NOTHING. REPLACING A DIVOT TAKES FIVE SECONDS TOPS. GO FOR IT.

And on the ballmark issue — *BELIEVE IT OR NOT, EVEN THOUGH YOUR APPROACH SHOT IS 15 YARDS OFF THE BACK OF THE GREEN, IT GOT THERE AFTER FIRST IMPACTING THE PUTTING SURFACE WITH THE FORCE OF A BOWLING BALL DROPPED FROM A 10-STORY BUILDING. FIXING A BALLMARK TAKES FIVE SECONDS. GO FOR IT.*

I know I'm sounding a little cynical here, but it gets maddening sometimes. Especially at my "upscale daily-fee" course. I expected people to be a little more respectful to the course after dropping twice as much money to play it. Boy, was I surprised.

The thing I find to be most "upscale" about the golfers at my facility is the quality of their lost golf balls. Their behavior, however, isn't much much better. The divots are still the same, too, as are the ballmarks and the beer cans tossed into the woods.

Golf offers plenty of other situations in need of creative signage. Here are a few ideas:

IT SHOULDN'T TAKE SO LONG TO WRITE "7" ON A SCORECARD! YOU'RE HOLDING UP THE GROUP BEHIND YOU. PLEASE MARK YOUR 7 ON THE NEXT TEE.

Or ... *IF YOU TAKE A DIVOT FROM THE BLUE OR GOLD TEES ON PAR 4'S AND PAR 5'S, FEEL FREE TO MOVE UP TO THE WHITE TEES WITH NO SHAME OR BLOW TO YOUR FRAGILE GOLFING EGO. THE GOLFERS BEHIND YOU WILL THANK YOU.*

Or ... *SWING ALREADY!*

Any ideas?

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