

With last year's disaster at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club still fresh on many minds, the United States Golf Association (USGA)

has created a list of 14 points that guide the process of conducting the tournament. Here's what I hear the 14 points entail:

1. When 36-hole leaders are at 5 under or better, ratchet up course conditions. If a green becomes too fast for play, tell the media it was a mistaken rolling or faulty weather prediction that caused it.

2. Try not to alter media spin between Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings. Use phrases like, "It has been brought to our attention;" and, "For some reason a different person on the grounds staff rolled that green today." This instills sense that you, as a committee person, are not really hands-on.

3. If a par 3 turns into a farce, have the organization's executive director make a joke on television about it being the toughest par 4 in America. Humor purportedly distracts from the gravity of the situation, although I never learned that at Stanford.

4. Ask NBC not to show image of green that was "mistakenly rolled" just as it is being double-cut. That might send the wrong message that "mistaken rolling" and the "wrong weather forecast" weren't the case.

5. If you are the director of rules and competitions and The Golf Channel's Rich Lerner asks if you're going to water the already-baked greens on Saturday evening during a howling wind, say that the course is "right where you want it." You can always blame the antiquated irrigation system later.

6. If one of our good friend\$ at NBC would like an interview during times of trouble, comply, even if it puts you in the position of speaking about issues you have no control.

7. When NBC's Johnny Miller declares a hole "unplayable," then and only then do you stop play to apply water to help keep balls from rolling off the green.

8. Schedule the USGA president for a photo-op presentation at the NBC booth on Sunday to soak up feel-good vibes after puff-piece shows him high-fiving underprivileged

Dipping Into USGA's 14-Point Spin Cycle

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



DEFLECT ALL

PLAYER CRITICISM

AS JUST STANDARD

BEHAVIOR OF

TODAY'S SPOILED

TOUR PRO

youth during staged clinic. If questions come up about course set-up issues, blame "perfect storm" of wind, sun, hole location and an accidental rolling that never happened.

9. When NBC's Dan Hicks jokes that you've gone from talk of growing the game to growing grass, act nobly like USGA President Fred Ridley did: Do not encourage Hicks or any form of humor. That's very dangerous.

10. Deflect all player criticism as just standard behavior of today's spoiled tour pro. If the critical player in question did not break 80, have staff member suggest that the player "gave up after the first hole."

11. Following the tournament, send a letter to host club apologizing for insinuation that the staff or volunteers did something wrong. Do not make the letter public, but make sure that the following groups scrutinize the letter: USGA in-house legal, our lobbyist/public relations firm Powell-Tate, Lee Abrams at Mayer, Brown & Platt, all attorneys on the executive committee and any other willing lawyers.

12. Going into following year's U.S. Open, use confusing and irrelevant baseball metaphors to distract skeptics, just as our executive director recently did when he told *The Los Angeles Times*: "I have told our people that we took one high and inside. So don't dust yourself off and dig in like Willie Mays."

13. Have USGA Green Section staffer write e-mail to critical writer suggesting that column writing is a dubious way to make living. Then let staffer go back to writing his reports.

14. When all else fails, recite former USGA President Sandy Tatum's line that states, "We're not trying to humiliate the best players, we're trying to identify them." It never fails. Well, almost never.

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