

I know, I know. Real men don't care about some dainty little piece of paper, just so long as they can tally their bets. Yet, why is it that so many golf scorecards have become overwrought productions loaded with too much color and useless information?

The great places in golf generally have pocket-sized, two-color cards with their course logos and names featured in a trademark font. Maybe the covers also state when the courses were established.

There are key local rules on the back of the cards and the proverbial stuff about playing by USGA rules. Inside, the information is limited to hole numbers, pars, handicaps and yardages.

We don't need to read a club's history or the book jacket-style blurbs about a layout's greatness. It is especially embarrassing to see a touched-up color photo depicting a course in an unrealistic state, or worse — a shot of a key water hazard's fountain spouting like a Yellowstone geyser. At a resort or high-end public course, these trivialities can be tolerated because the card acts as a memento.

Have you ever noticed how the look, feel and even the card stock tells us about the self-esteem of a facility? I'm here to tell you that keeping a card simple is the key to its success. Simplicity, as da Vinci said, "is the ultimate sophistication."

That said, here are my rules for the ideal scorecard:

Size. Small, vertical folding cards that fit into a back pocket are best. The cards designed for a cart steering wheel rarely fit in our pockets and almost never fit the pad for the cart either. Smaller is always better.

Paper. Off-white is nice, though white and yellow and assorted cream colors work, too. In the United States, we've taken things too far by varnishing paper stocks to the point that a pencil is unable to penetrate the dreaded coating. And all of the varnish in the world still won't make the paper impervious to the elements. So save some money and go with uncoated stock that allows pencils to actually do their job.

Aesthetics. No pastels, no peacockian color themes. Keep it simple at two or three colors max, with the important numbers in black.

Keep a Scorecard Simple, Stupid

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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The colors used should be the course's theme colors. If your course doesn't have its own color scheme, form a subcommittee to select one. On second thought, go with darker shades of green or blue, and shy away from bright, predictable primary colors.

Variety. There is something to be said for the multicard concept that creates a special scorecard for each set of tees. Or at the very least, a card that separates a "championship" or tournament layout from the primary card. Besides detaching the back tees that most people shouldn't be playing, the multicard concept allows for more space and bigger numbers that even the Haver camps can read. A variety of cards also makes it easier to change one set of cards if new tees are added.

Miscellaneous. If your scorecard company does not include the date of the card, see if you can have it included in the fine print somewhere on the back. Many of the old scorecards included a date, which proves handy for historians. In the future, this will allow architects and club historians to track all of the new tees added so the USGA can avoid upsetting a handful of equipment manufacturers!

And about those two little slits that allow walkers to store their pencil? It's a nice concept, but it rarely functions as intended. But since it's still handy, don't hesitate to include them, just try to locate a better place on the card so that the pencil smearing doesn't clog up the key documentation areas.

Mostly, remember Thoreau's words, because I'm sure he was thinking of golf scorecards when he wrote, "Our lives are frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify."

For a daily dose of Shack's golf commentary, check out his blog at www.geoffshackelford.com.