



“It doesn’t matter what level you play at, there are ways to speed up the process of hitting the golf ball.”

MARK WOODWARD, *Contributing Editor*

It’s OUR responsibility

One of the best things I’ve heard lately about the game of golf and our industry is the United States Golf Association’s (USGA) program “While We’re Young,” which deals with pace of play. “While We’re Young” is a phrase that everyone can understand and relate to. It’s a cool phrase that will catch on and be heard on golf courses all over the country. But will anyone really take it to heart? I’m guessing most golfers will jokingly say the phrase to their playing partners, but will people who are the biggest offenders of slow play really do their part? I certainly hope so.

In my opinion, pace of play is as important to the game’s long-term vitality as just about any other issue we face.

Obviously, when we talk about the game’s health and future, environmental concerns seem to always rise to the top of the list of things that the industry needs to continue to focus on. There is no doubt that working toward continuous improvement and sustainability at golf facilities remains extremely important. Everyone related to managing golf facilities, including head pros, vendors, manufacturers and those running golf tournaments, should wake up every day thinking about how we as an industry can improve on what

we do and the impact our facilities have on the long-term health of golf, our resources and our communities.

But as the USGA has come to realize, the issue of pace of play has now risen to a close second behind the environment in terms of importance. Pace of play has long been a problem in golf, and there have been countless efforts to find a solution. Golf facilities and golf associations have dealt with this issue and tried in vain to find something that really works.

No matter what magic formula those of us who work in golf come up with, the responsibility for correcting the problem of slow play lies directly on the shoulders of

all of us as individual golfers who enjoy the best game in the world.

There is no doubt we can each reflect on the way we play the game. Really and truly, it doesn’t matter what level you play at, there are ways to speed up the process of hitting the golf ball. And, I’m not talking about doing this occasionally throughout the course of playing a round. I’m talking about changing your pre-shot routine, your number of practice swings, your plumb-bobbing, the number of times you look at a putt, playing ready golf and so on.

In the big scheme of things in our day-to-day playing of the game at our local golf courses, who really cares if

you’re a little closer to the green than your partner who is on the other side of the fairway? Hit your ball and move on. Those of us who have played golf for many years all understand that it’s the small things you do on a golf course that may only amount to a few seconds or minutes here and there but in the end save a substantial amount of time throughout the entire round.

And let’s be honest with one another here. Most of us could plumb-bob all day long and still miss the putt on the low side of the hole and be short. I personally can take six practice swings and still hit the ball right, out of bounds.

Now, I’m not saying we should all run up our golf balls, not line up and just take a wild swing at it. I’m suggesting we still enjoy the game, try to improve along the way but do the small things that just might take several minutes off the time it takes to play a round. Believe me, your playing partners, the golfers behind your group and everyone on the course will benefit if each of us does our part.

While the USGA should be proud of its marketing folks for capitalizing on the very apropos phrase from the movie “Caddyshack,” I’m hopeful that we all can contribute to solving this extremely important problem golf faces... while we’re young.

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