

IS YOUR GOLF COURSE MARKED PROPERLY?

A golf course is not complete unless it is marked properly and permanently for day-to-day play. Your members cannot play under the Rules of Golf unless your course has its hazards, boundaries, obstructions, ground-under-repair and ball-drops staked and painted according to the rules.

No golf course would think of omitting tee markers or flagsticks. Why, then, does it ignore OB white stakes and paint, red and yellow water-hazard stakes and paint? According to the Rules of Golf, Definition 9, the "Committee" is the "committee in charge of competition, or, if the matter does not arise in a competition, the committee in charge of the course."

According to Rules 36-6, the Committee shall define accurately:

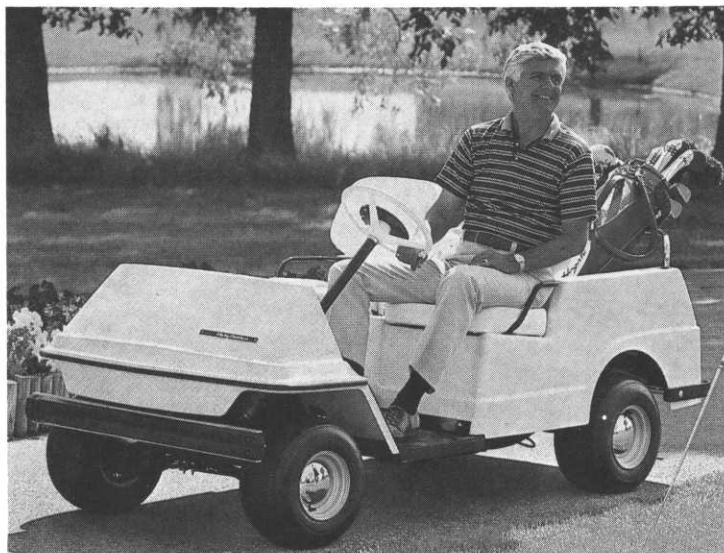
- a. The course and out-of-bounds.
- b. The margins of water hazards and lateral water hazards.
- c. Ground under repair.
- d. Obstructions.

And, the rules are very specific when they refer to defined areas of a golf course. If you do not define an area, no one will know, for sure, where it is - sure enough to make an official ruling.

Who is responsible for marking your course? It is a joint responsibility of the club's Tournament or Green Committee, the Club Professional and the Green Superintendent. It is imperative that the entire group should have a working knowledge of the Rules of Golf. It is not hard to mark your course if you know the rules.

OUT OF BOUNDS. Any area where you want to eliminate or prohibit play. Mark the exterior boundary of your property when you do not want people to trespass on your neighbors' property. Along this perimeter, if there is no fence, use 4x4 white stakes, 30 inches high. It is vital that these stakes be visible from one to the other and not obscured by shrubbery, trees or high weeds. Remember, the boundary is determined by inside edge of stake, or white line, or fence or other object marking OB. If any part of ball is in-bounds, it is playable.

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OB markings are permitted on "club property." OB is any area where you want play prohibited, like the nearby driving range, holes that run parallel and sometimes encourage "short cuts" that call for playing the hole unfairly or as a possible risk to other players. Nothing in the rules prohibit interior boundaries.

WATER HAZARDS. Two types exist. The regular water hazard crosses the line of play and lateral water hazard which runs parallel to line of play. The regular water hazard provides only two options. Either drop the ball, keeping the point where ball last crossed margin of hazard between you and hole, or go back and replay from where stroke was made. This hazard is marked with yellow stakes or paint or both. The lateral water hazard has these two options, plus, you can drop two club lengths from where ball last crossed the marked margin, not nearer the hole. Player also has the option to go to opposite side of hazard, an equal distance from the hole, and drop two club lengths. This hazard is marked with red stakes or paint and obviously should be marked on both sides, where necessary. To determine how to mark a water hazard behind a green, consider this: if it is possible for a player to keep the point where the ball last crossed the margin between player and hole, it should be marked yellow. If not, make it red, which most times is best behind greens.

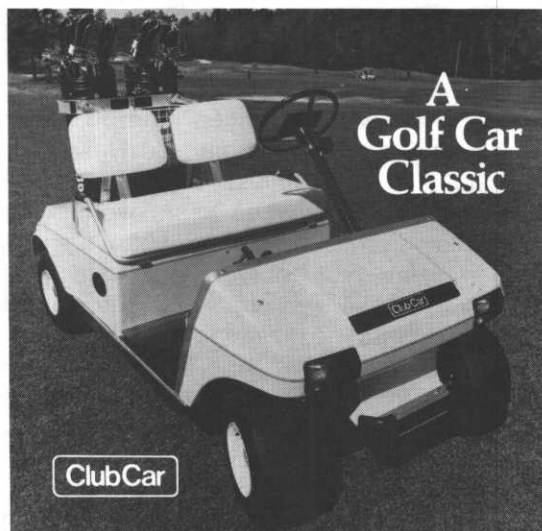
Use 1x2-inch stakes 8 inches above ground with the thin side facing line of play. Be sure stakes are clearly visible and in in-play areas, place stakes closer together. Paint between stakes helps provide a better definition of hazard boundaries and cannot be vandalized as easily as stakes.

GROUND UNDER REPAIR. Use white paint except in a larger out-of-play area where orange stakes and signs should be used. Remember, you can have "Ground Under Repair" under Definition 13 which includes "material piled for removal and a hole made by a greenkeeper even if not so marked".

BALL DROPS. If the rule does not provide the relief you want to give or there is an inequitable situation that should be rectified, designate a drop area. Sometimes it is not possible for a player to drop out of a hazard without ending up nearer the hole so the ball drop is a solution. Be sure to make it as "ball drop" and explain in Local Rules whether use of it is optional or mandatory. Once you mark you golf course, see to it that it stays that way.

Not only will this speed up play, but it will also eliminate post-round questions in the Pro Shop and Grill Room.

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