



Shotgun starts may be necessary to accommodate large golf events, but they also have various impacts on course maintenance that must be accounted for.

HOW DO SHOTGUN STARTS IMPACT COURSE MAINTENANCE?

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Golf course maintenance involves many activities. Mowing, rolling, blowing debris, changing holes and moving tee markers are just some of the daily activities that have to be performed before play commences. Fairway mowing, rough mowing and bunker raking are also tasks that typically begin well before play starts to optimize efficiency and minimize interference with golfers. To stay ahead of play, most maintenance crews start the essential daily setup work well before sunrise, beginning on the first hole and working outward through the course. Shotgun starts, where golfers begin the day teeing off from every tee at the same time, disrupt the normal maintenance routine.

For a shotgun start, the superintendent has to adjust the schedule and allocate more resources to preparing the course in order to complete all the essential tasks before play starts. Oftentimes, work may commence even earlier than normal and some tasks may even be performed during the previous evening.

This places a burden on the staff and usually requires additional resources to pay for overtime. Staff may also be diverted from other tasks, like equipment maintenance, to assist with course preparation for the event. If shotgun starts are a regular occurrence, the impact on routine maintenance can add up.

Another pressing concern is what the staff can do during the day if golfers are active on every hole and maintenance is restricted. In most cases, the maintenance staff are limited to activities around the margins of the course, near the clubhouse or at the maintenance facility during a shotgun event. While this may provide an opportunity to catch up on some tasks that get neglected during the season, it also diverts staff time away from the primary playing areas. Trying to accomplish much of anything on the course itself during a shotgun event is usually not very productive, potentially unsafe for the staff, and disruptive to golfers participating in what is likely a special event.

While shotgun starts may be convenient for completing a tournament or accommodating excess demand on a particular day, they should ideally be limited to no more than once a week. For every shotgun start, a golf course needs to somehow allow the maintenance team to make up for lost time on the course. This typically comes in the form of a maintenance day, or half day, where play is restricted. For two shotgun starts in a week, one closure day per week is a requirement. There needs to be a balance between accommodating the golf schedule and giving the maintenance department adequate time on the course to ensure that playing conditions are meeting expectations each day.