

Advanced Etiquette Lessons

By Barbara Puett

Old fashioned as it sounds, etiquette typifies a basic civility in golf that other sports have long since given up.

YOU RAKE BUNKERS, REPLACE DIVOTS, respect putting lines. In time these simple courtesies become second nature, part of a tradition that embodies the best interests and the spirit of golf. The more golf you play, however, the more apparent it becomes that the basics are just a start. Advanced golf etiquette requires a greater awareness of others, of our surroundings and of the game.

BETTER PLAYERS

When you have apprehensions about your ability — and at times we all do — don't apologize for your game. Make a positive statement. Assure your better playing partners that you enjoy the game and will endeavor to keep up.

CALL FORWARDING

We'd be lost without cellular phones, but, let's face it, they infringe on your inalienable right to get away from it all. Recognize that a convenience also can be a nuisance. No one wants to be reminded of pressing business elsewhere, especially on their backswing.

Some tips: Be as brief as possible. Return calls at the turn. An emergency situation naturally allows for leeway. You might apply the humorous touch — the imposition of a penalty (a mulligan or a stroke) whenever the infernal devices sound off at inopportune moments.

P.S. Put beepers on vibrate.

THE BLAME GAME

It's popular to blame anything on everything. Golfers invoke the gods, the stars, the weather, the greens. None of us are innocent, but realize that it's more fun to tell it than it is to hear it. Keep in mind excuses get old fast.

MIND IF I SMOKE?

Sharing a cart is no different from sharing a cab or a table. Yes, you're out-

doors but still in close quarters. "Do you mind if I smoke?" still needs to be asked. Be aware of sensitivities to smoke, ash, litter and where a cigarette is left. Suggestion: Take a minute at the start to pair smokers.

HAND IN GLOVE

You can putt wearing a glove; you can putt without one. It's up to you. All anyone asks is that you be quick and decisive in making the transition. Remove it before you get to the green. Put it back on before you get to the tee.

BAD BRAKES

Please stand still when someone is playing or about to play their shot. That doesn't mean merely slowing down to a crawl, inching your way ever so slightly forward. Stop.

While the effort to keep play moving is appreciated, it's bound to backfire. No time will be saved distracting someone on their backswing and then having to search for a mis-hit ball.

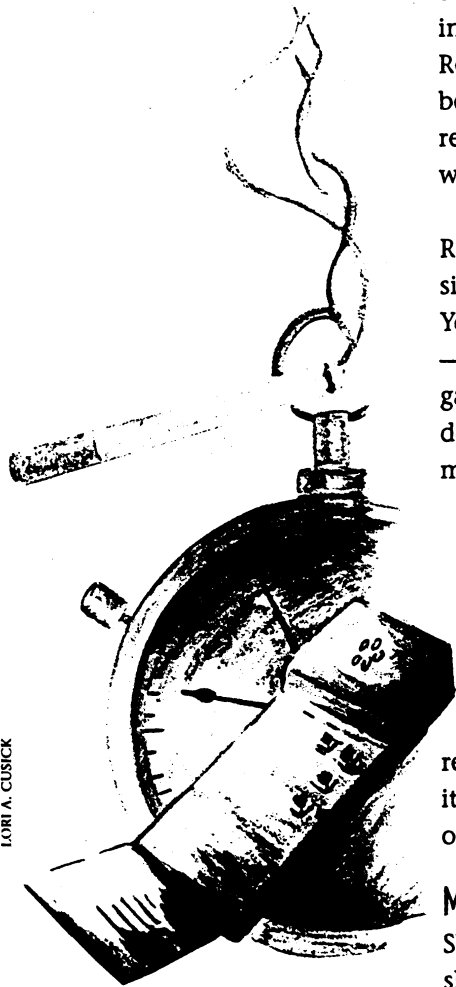
A SWING IN TIME

There are no timeouts in golf. It's not like tennis where enforced (and timed) breaks permit a chance to sit, regroup, rest or sip a drink. When the tee or the way ahead is clear, the invisible meter is running. It's time for someone to grab a club and hit. No one should have to look to you to play.

KEEPING SCORE

In the absence of a prize, a competition or a bet, who cares, really? Nowhere does it say keeping score is required. Like a rally in tennis, it might be more pleasant to simply savor the satisfaction of hitting a good shot now and then without the pressure. Tournaments, of course, are an entirely different matter. ■

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