

questions & assets of business golf

mixing golf with business is not without its hazards. The game is not, as some think, a four-hour interview. The course is not an excuse for an extra pitch. The payoff may not be immediate. And it may be as simple as your calls being returned.

Playing golf with a client is akin to a business lunch. You order, eat, chat and then, over coffee, if all goes well, business is taken up. If something needs to be discussed, save it for after the round.

Doing things right on the course communicates a professional approach that even a newcomer can pull off like a pro. Here are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about business golf.



Q: How can I prevent my male playing partners from gathering in the men's grill at the country club after we play?

A: Discuss on the first tee the plans for after the round. Be specific, especially if the surroundings are unfamiliar. (You might call the course so you can refer to the specific room to meet in by name.) As you leave the 18th green, remind them again, leaving a few minutes to change shoes or dispense with the clubs. After a suitable interval, if they haven't arrived, send a waiter or employee to remind the gentlemen that lunch is being served in the mixed grill.

Q: Should I let my boss win? What about a super-competitive prospect?

A: My advice is to be honest. Better players needn't ease up or dumb down their game. Neither should they treat the round with tournament-type seriousness. Among newer golfers, if you think not keeping score will put everyone more at ease, that's fine. But don't patronize a less experienced player. You also might suggest taking the best ball score for the foursome.

Q: I've been invited to play in a scramble and I've just taken up golf. Any hints?

A: You may feel that everyone's eyes are upon you, but rest assured, golfers are interested in their own games. You needn't be self-conscious. Be ready to play when it's your

turn and enjoy the competition. You'll be part of a team, which means everyone can contribute.

Q: The men I play with often seem to forget about me. After they've hit their shots, they take off down the fairway. Any suggestions?

A: Try to see the humor in it the first time. If it happens again, the group needs a gentle reminder. The tee boxes can often be far enough apart to make you out of sight, out of mind.

Q: My golf partner, who also happens to be an important client, habitually takes liberties with his score. How should I handle this?

A: If it's not a tournament and no betting is involved, forget about it. In tournament play, however, an incorrect score is unfair to other players. Assume it is an honest mistake, and ask rather than accuse. For example the conversation might go like this:

You: "You had a 6, right?"

Client: "I think ... ah ... 5."

You: "I may be wrong, but help me. Let's go over that for my benefit."

Repeated instances should be brought to the attention of the tournament chairman. Let the officials handle it. ■

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