

SCGA Team Play: Let's pick up the pace!

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SCGA Team Play continues to be one of the most popular SCGA programs, involving 179 clubs in the Southland. For the most part it brings out some great aspects of golf: talented play, spirited competition, camaraderie, sportsmanship and friendships that last a lifetime. Unfortunately, there is usually one big headache that goes along with hosting Team Play: the pace of play is horrific! It's time to start thinking about some solutions to the sluggish rounds and ways to pick up the pace.

Slow pace of play is always one of the SCGA's major topics of concern. A round of golf is far more enjoyable played in four hours rather than five-plus. It's each player's responsibility to commit to playing an efficient round. I've found that most players are oblivious to how fast or slow they are playing until they check their watch after the round.

Players should always be cognizant of their position on the golf course relative to their expected pace of play, as well as in relation to the group ahead of them. Players should make a conscious effort to keep up. This might mean playing ready golf for a hole or two and doing continuous putting until you get back into position. Both of these are allowed in stroke play.

Manage your time efficiently in between shots and be ready to play when it is your turn. Determine club selection and yardage while others are playing rather than waiting to do so when it is your turn to play. Read your putt while others are reading their putts and be ready to putt when it is your turn. These are all great tips for a stroke play round, but Team Play is a different story considering ready golf is not allowed and the unique format of concurrent four-ball and singles match play.

Let's focus on some Team Play pace of play solutions:

If it is a shotgun start, the field is only as fast as its slowest group. If it is a tee time start, the first group needs to be the pace setter and all subsequent groups need to keep up with the expected pace or the group ahead of them. What can you do if your group is playing slower than expected, has had trouble, or has a deliberate player and you find yourselves one or two holes behind?

1. UNDERSTAND THE PACE OF PLAY FOR THE DAY. How much time is allowed to play the stipulated round and how much time is allowed for each hole. The host club or host Team Captain should establish the expected time each group should finish each hole and the entire round and relay this information to each player. When setting an expected pace you should take into consideration the difficulty of the course set up, the layout of the course (especially the distance from greens to tees), whether carts are being used, etc.

2. WEAR OR CARRY A WATCH. I know, I know, only Phil Mickelson is getting paid to wear a watch on the golf course and most of us will leave ours in the locker room. But if you don't wear a watch, keep one in or attached to your golf bag and refer to it frequently. Pace of play is your responsibility. Check your pace coming through the ninth hole to see where you stand relative to the expected pace.

3. IF YOU CANNOT SEE THE GROUP AHEAD OF YOU, YOU ARE THE PROBLEM! Immediate action needs to be taken.

4. SINCE THIS IS MATCH PLAY, READY GOLF IS NOT AN OPTION, but you must always be ready to play as soon as it is your turn.

5. DECISION 2-1/1.5 ALLOWS PLAYERS TO HALVE A HOLE DURING THE PLAY OF THE HOLE. Tee off, agree to halve the hole, pick up your balls and move to the next tee. If your match is now back in position continue your match in a normal

way and stay focused on playing efficient golf. If your group still has a hole open, tee off again, agree to halve the hole and again pick up your balls and move on to the next tee. To be in compliance with *The Rules of Golf* players must not agree in advance to use this decision, but knowing it exists, players can tee off and then agree to halve the hole. Skipping holes may seem a little extreme but is called for if you have groups that are consistently falling more than a hole behind. From what I've heard, this is the norm for slow groups playing across the pond in Scotland as course marshals will escort you to your next tee if you are playing slower than a four-hour pace.

6. IF ONE SIDE OR PLAYER IS IN TROUBLE AND WILL OBVIOUSLY LOSE THE HOLE IN BOTH MATCHES, THAT PLAYER OR THOSE PLAYERS SHOULD CONCEDE THE HOLE. There is no reason to hold up the field just to have the experience and practice of playing a hole.

7. CONCESSIONS ARE A PART OF MATCH PLAY. Remember to be ready to concede an opponent's short putt. Staying focused saves time.

8. IF CARTS ARE RESTRICTED TO THE CART PATH ONLY, SELECT THE CLUB YOU THINK YOU WILL USE FOR YOUR NEXT STROKE PLUS AT LEAST ONE ON EITHER SIDE AND WALK TO YOUR BALL. You can be penalized for undue delay if you walk out initially with no clubs or only one club and have to return to the cart for a club, thus holding up play.

Playing efficient golf makes you part of the Pace of Play solution. Efficient golf involves monitoring your own pace, staying in position with the group ahead of you, being ready to play when it is your turn and making an effort to play faster if you fall off your expected pace. Hopefully some of these ideas will help speed up some Team Play rounds.

Also, to prepare for your matches read Rule 2: *Match Play* and Rule 30: *Three-Ball, Best-Ball and Four-Ball Match Play*.