

**KEEPING SCORE** By Roger Val, Director of Rules & Competitions

## Give Back and Volunteer



We are in the middle of summer and we are now in the process of preparing for the 2010 NCGA tournament season. One of the many important tasks is recruiting new volunteers. If you have participated in an NCGA sponsored event I am sure you have noticed and even talked with the tournament officials on the course assisting the players. The Rules and Competitions Department is blessed with 200 member volunteers from all over Northern California who give back to the game and make the tournament program the best of its kind in the country.

With the addition of the new NCGA Junior Tour it is essential that we add more tournament officials to the roster. At the moment, the tour is played on weekends offering juniors the opportunity to compete during the school year. This program will continue to grow and at some point will spread into the entire tournament season. If you want to volunteer but your job does not allow you get away during the week, the Junior Tour now offers the opportunity to get involved on weekends.

If you are interested in becoming a tournament official and want to give back to golf, an application can be found on the NCGA website ([www.ncga.org](http://www.ncga.org)). Go to the "Rules" tab on the homepage and access the "How to Volunteer" link or call the office and ask for a paper application. Tournament officials are asked to work a minimum of 10 days per year. The application process consists of two interviews - one with a current tournament official in your area and one with a current board member at an event.

If approved, each new official must commit to a one-day orientation and a multi-day NCGA rules seminar prior to being placed on the roster. The NCGA has a complete education program to assist volunteers in working tournaments.

You learn all the elements of tournament administration and if you are interested in the Rules of Golf, the program has an optional curriculum to become rules certified. This allows you to serve on the rules committee at various tournaments.

Volunteering for the NCGA allows you

to meet new people with the same interests and start new friendships. It is a great way to travel and see an array of golf courses. To be associated with the NCGA tournament program is enjoyable and a wonderful way to give back to this great game.

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A dedicated group of NCGA volunteers.

**KNOW YOUR RULES** By John Vander Borght, Manager Junior Tour

## Player Responsibilities



When playing in a tournament the player has a number of responsibilities. These responsibilities start before the player tees off on the first hole. Sometimes, when registering for a tournament, the player can pick a starting time or the club may assign a time. If the player has entered an NCGA tournament, the tee time will be assigned and either e-mailed or mailed about a week before the event.

Most importantly, it is essential that you get to the first tee before the assigned starting time. In NCGA tournaments we would like you to arrive at the tee about 7-8 minutes ahead of your starting time. This is approximately when the group in front is leaving the tee. Getting there early allows the starter time to go over the important items that need to be covered and also gives you the time to ask questions and digest what is being said.

Depending on the event, the starter may hand you a fellow competitor's scorecard directly, or hand over your own card and ask you to verify the handicap before exchanging it. Remember, you never keep your own card. You should also familiarize yourself with any local rules for that course. The NCGA has a handout, known as the "Hard Card," that contains all the standard local rules. A copy can be found on the NCGA website. In addition to the Hard Card there will be other local rules that are only in force for that course. We usually print these on the back of the hole location sheet. Sometimes the local rules will override the Hard Card. For example, the Hard Card says that electronic range finders may be used, but some tournaments do not allow including USGA qualifiers, where you can never use them.

For previous columns visit [www.ncga.org](http://www.ncga.org)

## TALKIN' TURF

By Mike McCullough, Director of Environmental and Water Resources

# The New California Golf Diet: Lean and Mean



Throughout the history of this column, I've written about the lack of water, too much water, recycled water and a myriad of golf course maintenance practices. It seems that every year there is always a hot topic or

an issue that needs attention.

This year we have to navigate two hazards—the current state of our economy and water supply issues. Earlier in the year the industry was given a muligan on the proposed tax on golf. More recently, water supplies for many metropolitan areas throughout the state have been reduced and subsequent rationing and restrictions are becoming the norm.

A common phrase used for golf

course tournament preparation is “lean and mean.” The definition of lean is twofold: 1) Courses scale back on a fertility program so that the turf is not as lush as usual, and 2) Facilities reduce the amount of water typically applied to the course to make the turf play firm and fast. The definition of mean is simple—golfers aren't able to “grip it and rip it” wherever and whenever without paying a price.

This phrase fits perfectly with our current predicament. Golf is certainly feeling the effects of the economy as a number of facilities are doing what they can to become lean in their expenses. Reducing hours for maintenance crews, delaying capital expenditures, laying off staff and cutting back on non-essential expenses are just a few ways facilities are coping with shrinking budgets.

Given the importance of water to a golf course, golf course superintendents



Some courses have stopped watering or cutting out-of-play areas to save resources.

are using all of their skills to reduce water use. By developing a drought contingency plan, removing turf areas out of irrigation, cutting back the number of times rough is irrigated and constantly monitoring irrigation equipment to determine if it is working properly, superintendents are able to minimize the water footprint of a golf course. Encouraging golf courses to convert to recycled water is also a high priority for those facilities facing stern reductions in their usage.

What are we supposed to make of all of this?

Here are three reasons why I'm so optimistic about golf's future: 1) Golfers and the industry at large are a resilient bunch. Some attrition may occur, but the facilities that thrive will do so by streamlining their operations and becoming innovative in how they use their resources. 2) Recently, *Golf Digest* revised its golf course rating criteria which places more emphasis on “lean and mean” playing characteristics—firm and fast fairways and firm yet receptive greens. Many televised golf tournaments this spring featured golf courses with non-green areas (dry and straw-colored). These courses played firm and fast and rewarded players who hit quality shots. 3) Today's challenges will help each facility improve communication with golfers, industry insiders and society at large. One example could be alerting golfers to the conditions of the course as the facility adjusts to a reduction in the water supply. Other examples include enhancing the channels of communication for every facet of the golf industry, notifying allied businesses and member-based organizations about the latest news or regulations affecting the industry as well as becoming more visible throughout the state by promoting the economic and environmental benefits the game provides the residents and visitors to the State of California.

When golf course conditions are lean and mean the lost art of shot making and prudent course management becomes more essential. When the economy and normal precipitation patterns return to a state of normalcy, my hope is our great sport continues to be lean and mean from the result of our dieting program because we are now healthier and more active than ever.

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Rule 6-1 says that the player is responsible for knowing all of this information. Failing to follow a rule just because you didn't know about it is not an excuse.

Once you have the scorecard and other paperwork, you should declare to your playing partners what kind of ball you are using and how it is marked. The NCGA will have marker pens in the starter's box to put identifying marks on your golf balls. It is a good idea to buy your own marker pen and keep it in your bag.

The final thing you should do is count the number of clubs in your bag. Make sure you don't have more than 14. If you do, get rid of one immediately; don't stash the club in your golf cart. Usually you can leave it with the starter.

Once all of this is done, don't leave the immediate area of the teeing ground. When your starting time arrives, you must be at the tee with a club and a ball, ready to play. It doesn't matter if you are first or fourth to play, everyone must be there at the appointed time. According to the Rules of Golf, if you are late to the tee, you are disqualified. There is a condition of the competition that you will find on the NCGA's Hard Card that modifies this penalty so that if you arrive within five minutes of your starting time, you are only penalized two strokes in stroke play or a loss of the first hole in match play. All too frequently, we have to penalize players for being late to the tee.

It may seem like a lot to remember, but if you familiarize yourself with some basic knowledge before you tee off, you will save strokes and play your best golf.

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