

All of Us are on the Handicap Committee.....for Peer Review

Sue finished her round. She played well. Debbie asked if she posted her score. Sue says "Gosh I'm tired, it's hot, I want a refreshing drink....and the pro shop is way over there. I'll post later." And never does.

Sam just finished his round. He played terrible. Bob says lets post our scores. Sam says "no, I shot so bad it won't affect my handicap, I need a beer instead."

The USGA rules on handicap say we must post all scores (with certain exceptions). Sue and Sam are well intentioned, but they are not supporting or fulfilling their responsibilities. What does it matter?? By not posting her score, Sue is unintentionally manipulating her handicap. That score might change her handicap index. And Sam, by not posting a "high" score, might be preventing a higher score from being bumped for consideration, unintentionally causing his handicap index to remain inflated.

Sue and Sam both play ladies and men's day, and some tournaments. Is it fair to all the others in their flight that they have been less than completely honest and open about their scores? Probably not.

Phil plays in his groups, no big bets on the line. He may or may not have to buy the beer. He shoots 79 and 80 most days. But if you look at his score history, he is posting 85 and 89. His groups don't bet big bucks, so what does it hurt if he inflates his scores.

If any of the above describes someone in your golfing group, why should you care? Maybe it doesn't affect you. But for the game of golf, and for all the other Villagers, you should care, and you should do your part.

There are approximately 7600 GHIN members in The Villages. In 2014, there were 887,000 rounds played on the Championship courses...with 80% of rounds played by Priority members. That means Priority members played approximately 710,000 rounds. Assuming Priority members have a GHIN Handicap Index; then approximately 100 rounds per year, or average of 2 per week, are played by GHIN members. This is why the Handicap Committee needs you to take responsibility for peer review.

The Villages Handicap Committee is comprised of 26 volunteers, a representation for the men and ladies for each Championship course, and a Chairman and Secretary. Volunteers just like you, who love the game....no experience necessary...so ask and you too can serve. However, the Handicap Committee is limited in their scope....they do not play in your groups, they do not know the true scores. They need your help.

Two basic premises underlie the USGA Handicap System. First, every player tries to make his or her best score on every hole for every round. Second, the player posts his or her score for purposes of peer review.

"Peer Review" is the ability of others to understand a player's potential ability (handicap index) and to form a reasonable basis to support or dispute a score that has been posted.

The USGA, in an article, wrote:

Golf is a game of honor. Players are expected to call penalties on themselves. In a tournament, the other competitors "protect the field" by monitoring each other in a group; at the end, placing an attesting signature on a scorecard. In that, "peer review" is the method by which players attest to the ability of those in a club, through monitoring playing and posting of scores.

The game's code of honor means that even a hint of cheating or dishonesty can tarnish an individual. Every golfer has experienced the uncomfortable moment of asking, or being asked, whether a ruling was administered properly or the right score was reported for a hole. But we are less frequently questioned on whether a round was posted correctly for handicap purposes, or posted at all. Such serious infractions cannot be ignored, lest they challenge the sense of honor as it applies to handicapping.

In The Villages, everyone can review a player's GHIN handicap index, and see the last 20 scores posted, with date and course played. But how do you know the posted score is accurate?

With 7600 GHIN handicap members, The Villages is quite different than the club back home, where you may have between 200-400 members, and most knew each other or of each other. In a small club you know who does not post scores, and it is easy to verify scores posted. The work of the handicap committee is known by everyone. In The Villages, the largest "country club" in the world, members of the handicap committee cannot possibly know everyone, let alone whether those 2-3 rounds a week by every member, are being posted accurately.

The Villages Handicap Committee needs your help in making sure Sue and Sam post their scores. And if Phil is cheating, collect score cards and names of playing partners who will support you. Phil should account for his improper posting. And the Committee needs your help in verifying what Phil shoots, so that when he plays men's day or in tournaments, his handicap is accurate.

Sue and Sam's playing partners are the ones most familiar with their play history. YOU, the playing partners, protect every one of us in The Villages by making sure they are posting their scores properly. That is Peer Review. For Phil, who posts inflated scores, only YOU have the knowledge he is "cheating" the system.

If Smokey the Bear played golf, he might have said "Only You Can Prevent Cheaters like Phil". Peer Review is not spying on your neighbor. Peer Review is your contribution to keeping the handicap system honest for the rest of us. You are needed to help monitor the neighborhood. And when the round is over, we need for Sally to say "everyone needs to post their scores.....NOW." With everyone at the terminals you can see what is being posted. Or follow up and check scores that have been posted.

It's your handicap system. Let's keep it fair.

If you have questions, please ask a Handicap Committee member. The Committee membership is posted in all of the golf shops, and on www.GolfTheVillages.com.

Help make Peer Review work.