



# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

April 9, 2001

TO: Club Representatives and Assistants  
FROM: Ad Hoc Committee on Rules & Handicaps  
SUBJECT: MISGA 2001 Rules and Handicap Project

*SLA*

We all love golf. And because we love the game, we are concerned about protecting its integrity. We strive to follow the rules and etiquette of golf, and we comply with the USGA Handicap System. These elements are the heart of the game's integrity.

Unfortunately, there are increasing signs that the MISGA golf experience is being spoiled by associates who casually apply the rules and etiquette of golf and fail to comply with the handicap system. Annually, these issues are acknowledged as problems. People complain and much discussion ensues; however, little is done to correct them.

We hope this year will be different. Seeing a need to "get involved," the MISGA Board of Directors has formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Rules and Handicaps for the 2001 golf season. In turn, the committee has developed a program intended to make MISGA associates mindful of the most violated and abused rules and etiquette of golf. Another goal is to get associates in the habit of posting scores in accordance with the USGA Handicap System.

The responsibility for carrying out the project will rest with each club rep. You won't have to become the "Rules Czar" or the "Handicap Police." In fact, you can remain the same old likable guy your colleagues have grown so fond of and you can still get the job done. That job will be to inform your fellow associates about rules, etiquette and the handicap program. The more information you give the members, the more cooperation you'll likely receive, particularly in the area of handicap compliance.

The committee has prepared an enclosed package of materials to help you with implementing the project at your club. Please review it carefully. You may find some duplication, but that's by design. We recognize that each club rep has his own unique set of circumstances, so consider how the material can best be used at your club. Be creative and add ideas of your own to the mix. Get your club pro involved. We're trying to raise awareness levels. Success of the project will depend on a steady flow of information presented in a positive and professional manner.

Associates who are sloppy in applying the rules of golf don't know it yet, but they're going to enjoy the game much more by the end of the summer. One of the most appealing aspects of the game of golf is the discipline required to play it right.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck. Your efforts are going to benefit MISGA for years to come.

Enclosure: Materials MISGA 2001 Rules and Handicap Project

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## MISGA 2001 Rules and Handicap Project

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## Club Rep Guidance

**Introduction.** You'll need the enclosed material to carry out the rules and handicap project. Most of the material consists of one-page fact sheets dealing with specific rules of golf, golf etiquette and the USGA Handicap System. Sample penalty score notification letters are provided. You'll also find copies of future MISGAgram articles which are furnished for your information only. Items not in the package are your own creativity and the considerable help you can get from your club's golf professional.

**Using the Material.** There's no pat answer on how you should use what's in the package. You may conclude that your membership needs to hear more about the handicap system than either the rules or etiquette of golf. If that's the case, that's where you should initially place the emphasis. Whatever you do, try to make it interesting and always have a topic ready for your members to read or hear about. Following are suggestions on how you might proceed.

**Fact Sheets.** Use the fact sheets as handouts or for posting on bulletin boards. Feel free to make as many copies as necessary and place them on golf carts prior to the start of a mixer. This way you'll catch the visitors as well as your own members. Items placed on bulletin boards should be refreshed periodically, e.g., Rule of the Month, Etiquette Tip of the Week, etc.

**Announcements.** Since you or the golf professional should already be in the habit of welcoming visitors to your club before the start of each mixer, use the opportunity for a brief announcement regarding a rule or a breach of etiquette. On handicaps, let the players know you will be checking to ensure that they post their adjusted scores.

**Demonstrations.** Before certain mixers have the golf professional give a demonstration. You might ask him to show the proper way to mark a ball on the green or the proper way to move and return the mark to its original position. The pro could also show how to properly repair a ball mark or how to take relief from an obstruction. There are countless other actions that lend themselves to a demonstration approach, and most pros would love to help out.

**Member Comments.** Some players feel so strongly about breaches of etiquette and sloppy application of the rules that they might be willing to offer a "guest comment" prior to the start of a mixer. Ask for volunteers.

**USGA Membership.** Many MISGA associates are members of the USGA; many are not. You should encourage non-members to join if for no other reason than to receive the Golf Journal. The Journal is frequently filled with interesting items on rules, handicaps and etiquette.

**USGA Web Site.** Associates need to know that this is a valuable place to visit for the official word on the rules of golf, rules decisions and handicapping. Most material can be downloaded.

**The USGA Handicap System.** Without a doubt this is going to be the most difficult part of the project. MISGA bylaws require associates to comply with the rules of the USGA,

which, of course, includes the posting of scores in accordance with the USGA Handicap System. You need to remind them of their responsibilities to the organization. One thing to remember: Once the word gets out that you or your club's handicap committee is checking on the posting of scores, the deadbeats will shape up real fast.

Clubs With Handicap Programs. If your club has strong enforcement of the USGA Handicap System through the golf committee, you're in luck. You'll be able to coordinate your efforts with the handicap committee or the golf professional. The handicap chairman will be glad to receive your input and know that you're helping to keep an eye on the MISGA associates. Transgressions will be his to handle.

Clubs Without Handicap Programs. An essential element of the USGA Handicap System is the requirement that each golf club that issues handicap indices must have an active handicap committee. If monitoring of your club's program is weak or non-existent, someone needs to remind management of this requirement. Technically, if your club is not monitoring the posting of scores, it cannot issue a handicap as authorized or approved by the USGA.

Monitoring by Club Reps. Some club reps gather all the scores from both home and away mixers and post them for the members. Other reps insist that the associates personally post their scores and then they follow up to see that it's been done. Whenever a player is issued a handicap by his home club he agrees to peer review – providing access to scoring records and USGA Handicap Indices for inspection by fellow members and the club's handicap committee. This means you are entitled to look over his shoulder. To properly monitor compliance, you should gather score cards, check adjustments and then check the computer. If associates don't post, you need to review the sample penalty letters and consider your course of action. Navigating the waters of the USGA Handicap System may be unfamiliar territory to many of you. If that's the case, have your golf professional order from the USGA "The Handicap Chairman's Survival Kit." Everything is laid out in black and white. If anyone in your membership has experience with handicap administration, consider tapping him for assistance.

First Things First. You can't assume that all associates are familiar with Equitable Stroke Control. Indeed many are not. Therefore, early in the project associates need to understand the ESC table, at least as it applies to their handicap range. Then they need to know which scores to post and which scores not to post. Fact sheets are included for each topic and they should be displayed prominently at the beginning of the project. The USGA booklet, "Uncle Snoopy Wants You to Know How to Use Your Handicap," offers a thorough description of ESC. It's available at a nominal price or it can be downloaded from the USGA web site and then reproduced.

Other Actions. While you are busy with the above items, the committee will be providing articles to the MISGAgram and the MISGA web site at <<http://www.misga.org>>. In addition, the members of the committee will be standing by to help you as necessary and to hear your feedback. Their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are in the MISGA leadership roster. The members include:

Sam Hall	Tantallon	Acting Chairman
Dick Dale	Seaford	Division I
Bill Brown	Piney Branch	Division II
George Donadoni	Bay Hills	Division III
Bill McCullen	Montgomery Village	Division IV
Mike Malone	Sussex Pines	Division V

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## ETIQUETTE

### Avoiding & Repairing Damage

1. Before leaving a bunker, a player should carefully fill up and smooth over all holes and footprints made by him. Rakes should be replaced with care.
2. Repair ball marks on the putting green, even those you don't make. The preferred method is to discard the loose turf, if any, and carefully pull the sides of the mark together and tamp down with the sole of your putter.
3. On completion of the hole by all players in the group, damage to the putting green caused by golf shoe spikes should be repaired. Yes, soft spikes can cause damage.
4. A player should ensure that any divot hole made by him is carefully repaired by either replacing the loosened turf or filling the hole with sand or prepared mixture provided by the course.
5. In taking practice swings, players should avoid causing damage to the course, particularly the tees, by removing divots.
6. Players should avoid causing damage to the putting green by leaning on their putters, particularly when removing the ball from the hole. Under no circumstances should a ball be removed from the hole using the putter head as a retriever.
7. Carts should be driven a reasonable distance from soft, wet areas to avoid damage to the course.
8. When conditions restrict carts to paths only and players are uncertain about club selection, they should take two or more clubs when walking to their ball.
9. Carts should be parked to the side or rear of the green so that when play on the hole is complete players can quickly depart the area.
10. Do not drive carts near putting greens, on tee boxes or between greens and bunkers. Do not drive into peoples' yards.

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## ETIQUETTE

### Check List for Speeding Up Play

1. Take inventory: Enough tees? Enough balls? Divot repair tool? Ball marker? Scorecard? Pencil?
2. Identify your ball on the first tee. Make sure it is clearly and uniquely marked.
3. Play from the tees best suited for your skills.
4. To save time, shorter hitters should hit first.
5. Play ready golf.
6. Limit the number of practice swings.
7. Practice swings or conversation are permissible until someone addresses his ball.
8. Always carry an extra ball in your pocket.
9. Miss 'em quick. No explanations please on why you hit a bad shot.
10. Be ready to play when it's your turn. Step up to the tee box.
11. Once you've played, vacate the tee box immediately.
12. Make a conscious effort to watch everyone's ball. Line it up with trees, rocks, bushes, houses, etc.
13. Mulligans are an indefensible source of slow play, and they're against the law!
14. Tinkering with your swing is for the range or lessons on your own time. Nobody cares to see your "one piece take away" one more time.
15. Complaints of one's own bad luck are in infinitely bad taste. There is no such thing as bad luck on a golf course.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## ETIQUETTE

### Consideration of Other Players

1. No one should move, talk or stand close to or directly behind the ball or the hole when a player is addressing the ball or making a stroke. Exception: During a Scramble competition, it is permissible to stand behind your partners when they putt.
2. On the putting green, players should take care not to walk or stand in the "line of putt" of other players. It matters not that one is wearing "soft spikes."
3. When tending the flagstick for another player, the proper position is at arms length from the stick with your shadow falling away from the line of putt.
4. The first player to hole out on a green is expected to stand ready to replace the flagstick.
5. After holing out on a green, it is good practice to immediately move to the next tee and mark the scorecard when you get there.
6. "Ready Golf helps speed play, but prior to playing a stroke or making a practice swing, the player should ensure that no one is standing close by or in a position to be hit by the club or ball.
7. If a player hits a bad shot, the player should forget that shot and move on to the next. Opponents and fellow competitors are not interested in hearing why the shot was executed badly.
8. If a player hits a bad shot, fellow competitors should resist the temptation to offer advice unless asked to do so.
9. Do not leave cigarette butts, cigar butts, sunflower shells, wrappers, cups or other kinds of trash on the course. Use trash receptacles.
10. When marking a ball on the green, the marker should be placed behind the ball without touching it. Do not place the ball mark to one side or in front of the ball.

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## ETIQUETTE

### Let's Conquer Slow Play!

Slow play is ruining the game of golf. No one gets any enjoyment playing a five-hour round. Slow play is the most egregious breach of etiquette. It is unfortunate that a few individuals often delay play for the entire field. This clearly demonstrates lack of consideration for other players. Please consider the following self-evident truths.

- Your position on the golf course is immediately behind the group in front of you.
- Keep up with the group ahead of you, not just ahead of the group behind you.
- You are out of position on the golf course if your group has reached the tee of a par 3 and the hole is clear.
- Your group is out of position if it has failed to clear the tee of a par 4 before the preceding group clears the putting green.
- Your group is out of position if it arrives at the tee of a par 5 when the preceding group is on the putting green.
- Although only one or two individuals in a group may be slowing down play, it is the responsibility of the entire group to maintain the pace of play.
- Slow play is not the exclusive domain of high handicappers; it afflicts golfers of all abilities.
- Slow players are the happiest golfers on the course, because they never have to wait on anyone.

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## ETIQUETTE

### Pace of Play

1. If a player believes his ball is lost outside a water hazard or is out of bounds, to save time, he should play a provisional ball.
2. Leave the green promptly and mark scores at the next tee.
3. Groups holding up players while searching for a lost ball or groups falling more than a clear hole behind the players in front should allow groups behind them to play through. The ball search should not reach the five-minute limit before extending this courtesy.
4. If a player can do so without interfering with another player's line to the green, he should walk or ride forward to his ball and be ready to hit.
5. There is absolutely no reason for a player to go through a complete setup followed by several "real-time" practice shots. Don't do it! Anticipate your shot, select your club and be ready to hit immediately when it is your turn.
6. Walk quickly between shots and between the cart and your ball.
7. Players should watch the flight of every ball, not just their own.
8. When conditions restrict carts to paths only and players are uncertain about club selection, they should take two or more clubs when walking to their ball.
9. Carts should be parked behind green or at the point of exit from the hole so that when play on the hole is complete players can quickly depart the area.
10. Line up your putt while others are putting or preparing to putt. Then, be ready to putt when it's your turn.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### Don't Touch That Ball!

At many MISGA mixers, players are routinely permitted to improve their lies in their own fairways. This is an exception to the USGA Rules of Golf, considered necessary because adverse turf conditions often are not conducive to playing the ball as it lies.

However, members must be aware that this exception does not apply elsewhere on the course. If your ball ends up in the rough, it's because you put it there. You must play the ball as it lies. There are a lot of don'ts. Here are a few of them, but by no means all of them. Don't "fluff up" the ball with your clubhead. Don't use your foot to press down on the grass, soil or sand behind your ball. Don't move, bend or break anything growing. Each of these don'ts is a two stroke penalty in stroke play; loss of hole in match play.

But a lot of MISGA players know that except in a hazard they may, without penalty, lift a ball believed to be their own for the purpose of identification and clean it to the extent necessary for identification. Guess what? Too many players routinely do this not to identify their ball, but to improve their lie. Their actions run counter to the intent of this exception.

Player beware! Before lifting the ball, you must announce your intention to your opponent in match play or fellow competitors in stroke play and mark the position of the ball. If you lift the ball without announcing your intention in advance, don't give your opponent or fellow competitors an opportunity to observe your actions and clean the ball more than necessary for identification, you will incur a penalty of one stroke and the ball must be replaced.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### "Fairly Taking a Stance"

A player is entitled to a lot of things on a golf course, but a normal stance is not one of them. Let's assume that you've hit your drive into the trees, some with low hanging branches. You locate your ball, which must be played as it lies, but as you attempt to take your stance you discover that it won't be easy. What next?

Permitted. You can attempt to take a stance by backing into the branches or young saplings even if this causes movement or breakage. Also, you can use your hands to bend branches to get at your ball.

Not Permitted. You can't deliberately move, bend or break branches with your hands in order to get them out of the way of your backswing or stroke. You can't take any of the following unauthorized actions either.

- Stand on branches to prevent them from interfering with your swing.
- Hook one branch on another or braid branches together.
- Bend with your hand a branch obscuring the ball after you've taken your stance.
- Bend an interfering branch with your leg in taking your stance when the stance could have been taken without doing so.

You must accommodate the situation in which the ball is found and take a stance as normal as the circumstances permit. That's what is meant by the term "fairly taking a stance." If you can't establish a stance of any kind, you can always take an unplayable lie.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### Lateral Water Hazards (The Red Stakes)

One of the most misunderstood rules of golf deals with what to do after you've hit your shot into a *lateral water hazard*. First of all, you and your playing companions must agree that there is *reasonable evidence* that your ball entered the hazard. Reasonable evidence in this instance might be a visible splash or a hard rolling ball near the margin of the hazard. You might even find your ball in shallow water. Without such evidence, the ball must be treated as a *lost ball*. The next important piece of information is to determine the point at which your ball last crossed the margin of the hazard.

Okay, you conclude that your ball is in the hazard. Now, *under penalty of one stroke*, you have three options. You may:

- play another ball from the spot where the original ball was played.
- drop a ball anywhere on the far side of the hazard keeping the point of entry into the hazard in line with the hole.
- drop a ball outside the hazard within two-club lengths of and not nearer the hole from the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the hazard or a point on the opposite margin of the water equidistant from the hole.

Dropping the ball two-club lengths from the margin of the hazard has its pitfalls. More often than not you don't get a level lie and the ball probably comes to rest in rough. Consequently, players tend to stretch the two-club length rule in order to get a better lie. Don't do it!

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### Miscellaneous Stuff – No. 1

1. You're having such a bad day that you run out of golf balls, so you borrow a sleeve of balls from one of your playing companions. Two stroke penalty, right? Wrong. You're allowed to do this. Don't ask to borrow a club, though. That's a different matter.
2. You notice that one of the guys in your foursome is playing with X-d Out Titleists, so you inform him that he can't do that in a tournament event. He tells you to buzz off! And he's right. There is no USGA prohibition against using an X-d Out ball as long as the brand conforms to USGA standards.
3. Stakes defining a water hazard (yellow) or lateral water hazard (red) can be moved if they interfere physically with your play or your line of play. That's because they're considered obstructions. White out of bounds stakes are not obstructions and can't be moved. By the way, don't forget to replace the hazard stakes.
4. Many golfers tape their fingers for medical purposes, e.g., to reduce blisters or the possibility of skin splits. However, you can't bind fingers together. That's considered an aid in gripping the club.
5. During a hard rain you ask your playing partner to hold your umbrella over you while you putt. You can't do that, but if you want to hold the umbrella yourself and putt with one hand that's perfectly all right.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### Miscellaneous Stuff – No. 2

1. You're on the last hole putting for the win when you notice that your opponent is standing on an extension of your line of putt a few paces beyond the hole. You ask him to move, but he refuses. Guess what? That's not a penalty against your opponent, although it is a breach of etiquette. You might want to avoid this guy in the future.
2. You can't ground your club in a bunker or in a hazard – period.
3. If your ball becomes embedded in its own pitch-mark in the rough, what are your options? You are entitled to relief only if the local rule for an embedded ball anywhere through the green is in effect. Otherwise, you must play the ball as it lies or declare it unplayable. The rules grant relief for an embedded ball in a closely-mown area through the green.
4. Every now and then you run into a golfer who marks his ball on the green with a commemorative coin he acquired at the World's Fair or in Timbuktu. Often times it's three times the size of a silver dollar. He ought to use a small coin, right? Not necessarily. Although the rules recommend a small coin, a player can use a tee or the toe of his putter to mark the position of the ball before lifting it.
5. Is the player who lifted the ball the only one who may replace it? Not necessarily. One of three people may replace the ball: the player, his partner or the player who lifted or moved it.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### Obstructions

An obstruction is anything artificial, including the artificial surfaces and sides of roads and paths. If your ball is in or on an obstruction or so close that it interferes with your stance or area of intended swing, you may either play the ball as it lies or take relief. Obstructions include cart paths and any immovable object such as sprinkler heads, shelters, benches, pump houses, signs, planted gardens, posts, ropes and ball washers. Objects defining out of bounds are not considered obstructions. Forms of interference, but not obstructions, from which you may take relief include casual water and ground under repair.

If you take relief from an obstruction you need to determine the nearest point to the original lie which:

- is not nearer the hole,
- avoids interference with your stance and swing, and
- is not on a putting green or in a hazard.

If the original lie is in a hazard, the point shall remain in the hazard. You can lift and drop your ball within one club length of the determined point.

If your ball comes to rest near a sprinkler head, but the sprinkler head does not interfere with your stance or your swing, you cannot make claim to a "mental" obstruction. There is no such thing.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### On the Putting Green

It was a struggle off the tee and it took an extra iron shot to reach the green, but you made it! Now let's examine some of the pitfalls that await you on the green.

**Loose Impediments.** One of the players in the previous foursome had a difficult bunker shot and left a hefty deposit of sand on the green. It happens to be in your line, so you remove your cap and use it to knock the sand away. Don't do it! Removing loose impediments with a cap or towel is not permitted. You can only use your hand or club. The penalty for breach of this rule: loss of hole in match play; two strokes in stroke play.

**Taking Relief.** While lining up your putt you notice an old hole plug which is directly in your line. Worse yet the old hole plug has become a sink hole. You think to yourself, "Rub of the green. Just my luck." But wait a minute! You get a chance to try to pull the old plug even with the rest of the green's surface. The same would be true if the old plug had been in a raised condition. If you can't remedy the situation, the condition is considered ground under repair and you are entitled to relief.

**The Overhanging Ball.** Your partner hits a terrific putt that overhangs the lip of the hole. On his way to retrieve the ball he casts his shadow over the hole for about 20 seconds in hopes of wilting the grass so that the ball will fall into the cup. Does his shadow violate the rules of golf? No, but the delay in retrieving his ball might. A player is allowed enough time to reach the hole without unreasonable delay and an additional 10 seconds to determine whether the ball is at rest. If by then the ball has not fallen into the hole, it is deemed to be at rest. If the ball subsequently falls into the hole, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke and he needs to add a penalty stroke to his score for the hole.

**The Flagstick.** Your playing companion removes the flagstick and lays it on the green some 10 feet behind the hole. As he strikes his putt you realize that his ball is going to hit the flagstick. Being a fair competitor, you run over and move the stick allowing his ball to roll on by. Unfortunately, you just lost the hole in match play. In stroke play you incurred a two-stroke penalty. Why? Because you moved an obstruction (the flagstick) while a ball was in motion. It might have been a golf club. The other guy? No penalties of any sort.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### The Provisional Ball

You've just hit your drive so far to the right that it may be lost or out of bounds. You know the ball did not go into a water hazard. Which of the following statements best describes your next course of action?

- a. "That may be lost. I'm going to reload."
- b. "That may be out of here."
- c. "I'd better hit another one."
- d. "I'll never find that one. I'll play another."

If you selected any of the above, you're wrong. If you are going to hit another ball, you must clearly utter the words, "This is a provisional ball." It's always a good idea to hit a provisional ball if you think your original ball may be out of bounds or lost. If it turns out that indeed your ball is OB or lost, you play your provisional ball and you will be hitting four.

There is no such thing as a provisional ball for a shot you suspect entered a lateral water hazard. In this situation, if you play another shot thinking it's a provisional, you're really placing a second ball in play and you've incurred the distance penalty not associated with a lateral water hazard.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## RULES OF GOLF

### What, No Gimmes?

In MISGA, we play a lot of Two-Best-Balls-of-Four or some version of that format. It has become accepted practice that if you are clearly out of the hole and your score will not contribute to your team's effort, you can pick up and record the score that you most likely would have achieved. This keeps the frustration level down and it probably speeds up play.

However, some MISGA players have gotten into the habit of conceding putts to other players when those putts count in their team's score. This is a bad habit and it's against the Rules of Golf. Simply stated, if a ball is not holed, it doesn't count.

In stroke play, if a player fails to hole out at any hole and does not correct his mistake before he plays a stroke from the next tee, or in the case of the last hole of the round, before he leaves the green, he is disqualified. In addition, failure to hole out results in an invalid score and distorts the handicap system. In other words, if you do not hole out every putt, your total score is invalid, you are disqualified and your team suffers the consequence of not being able to use any of your score.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Course Ratings and Slope

A USGA Course Rating is based on the score a scratch golfer should shoot from a certain set of tees. The more difficult the course for the scratch player, the higher the course rating. Not many golfers, and certainly not many in MISGA, play at scratch or better. That's why the USGA created Slope. It defines a golf course's degree of difficulty for the average golfer. The higher the slope, the more difficult the average golfer will find the course.

How does slope affect you? Slope makes your handicap "portable." You'll get more strokes on a course if its slope is higher than the one at your own course. On a course with a lower slope, you'll receive fewer strokes. For example, a player with a handicap index of 13.0 will get 14 strokes on a course with a slope of 122. Raise the slope to 127 and the same index gets 15 strokes. Conversely, a slope of 117 garners only 13 strokes. For easy reference, a booklet, covering the majority of the courses in the Mid-Atlantic states and their corresponding Course Handicap Tables, is available in your pro shop.

A word to the wise: Know your handicap index and get the strokes you've got coming.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Determining Your Most Likely Score (For Posting Purposes)

#### **Incomplete Holes**

If you pick up on a hole, record the score you most likely would have achieved. This does not mean if you are four feet from the hole in four strokes and already out of the hole that you can pick up for a seven. In this example, you should probably record a score of five; certainly nothing above six. In any event, your score must not exceed your Equitable Stroke Control (ESC) limit.

#### **Conceded Strokes**

In a match, if your opponent concedes a putt, record the score you most likely would have made. An "X" should precede this most likely score. Your score for the hole cannot exceed your ESC limit. A putt may not be conceded in stroke play. The ball must be holed to count in a competition.

**Note:** A most likely score is valid only for USGA Handicap purposes and can't be used in competition.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Equitable Stroke Control

Equitable Stroke Control (ESC) keeps an exceptionally bad hole from changing your Handicap Index too much. ESC is used to adjust your score back into its normal range. Under USGA rules, there is a maximum score you can record on any hole depending on your Course Handicap.

For handicap purposes, you are required to adjust your hole scores (actual or probable) when they are higher than the maximum number you can post.

There is no limit to the number of holes on which you can adjust your score.

The ESC table is as follows:

<b><u>18-Hole Course Handicap</u></b>	<b><u>Maximum Score on any Hole</u></b>
9 or less	Double Bogey
10 through 19	7
20 through 29	8
30 through 39	9
40 and above	10

It takes just a few minutes to adjust your score once you know how the system applies to you.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Know the Basics

Every golfer wants to enjoy a fair match on any golf course. The USGA Handicap System allows this to happen. But first you need to acquaint yourself with the basics.

#### ***Before You Play***

- Know your USGA Handicap Index.
- Check the Course Handicap Table for the right tees to determine the number of strokes.
- Determine how many strokes you get for the game you are playing and apply the handicap allowance for that game. Hint: You don't always get 100% of your handicap.

#### ***As You Play***

- Write your hole-by-hole scores on the scorecard.

#### ***After You Play***

- Adjust your score for handicap purposes.
- Post your score. This should be as automatic as teeing off on the first hole.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Pitfalls in Preferred Lies "Winter Rules"

The USGA does not endorse preferred lies, or "winter rules." A local rule may be adopted when extreme adverse conditions are widespread.

Before preferred lies are permitted, the club or golf organization should consider the following facts.

Preferred lies, or "winter rules"

- conflict with the Rules of Golf and the fundamental principle of playing the ball as it lies.
- are sometimes adopted under the guise of protecting the course when, in fact, the practical effect is just the opposite. They permit the moving of the ball to the best turf, from which divots are taken to injure the course even more.
- tend generally to lower scores and handicap indexes, thus penalizing players when competing at a course where the ball must be played as it lies.

If a local rule for preferred rules is adopted

- it should be written in detail as there is no established code for preferred lies.
- scores made shall be posted for handicap purposes unless precluded by poor conditions as determined by those in charge of the competition.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Posting Your Score

#### **Post These Scores:**

- All scores no matter where you play.
- When you play at least 13 holes. On the holes you didn't play, record a par plus any handicap strokes you would have received.
- If you play two nines in a row (even if it's the same nine), even if you play them on different days. Simply combine the nines into an 18-hole score.  
Add the nine-hole Course Rating together and the Slopes. Remember, you can only combine consecutive nines.
- When you play a course during its "active season" even though your home course is "out of season." For example, if you are vacationing or wintering in the South, where the season is year-round, you must keep track of your scores and post them when the season begins at your club.

#### **Don't Post These Scores:**

- If you played fewer than 13 holes.
- When you play in a competition limiting the types of clubs used, such as a one-club or irons-only tournament.
- When an 18-hole course is less than 3,000 yards.
- When a majority of the holes aren't played under the Rules of Golf, as in a "scramble."
- "Out of season" scores. Each regional golf association has its own season. If you're traveling, check to see if you're playing in an active season at the course you visit. Scores made in the "Sunbelt" are always to be posted because the season is year round.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Purpose and Compliance

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the USGA Handicap System is to make the game of golf more enjoyable by enabling golfers of differing abilities to compete on an equitable basis. The system provides fair Course Handicaps for players regardless of ability, and adjusts a player's USGA Handicap Index up or down as his game changes. A basic premise underlies the USGA Handicap System. That is, every player will try to make the best score he can at each hole in every round he plays, regardless of where the round is played, and he will post every acceptable round for peer review.

#### **Compliance**

This year the MISGA Board of Directors is asking every club representative in each division to pay special attention to compliance with the USGA Handicap System. The emphasis is not limited to the posting of scores achieved in MISGA events. The Board wants MISGA associates to post all scores. How score postings are monitored is a local matter. Many clubs have procedures and follow them. Those that don't should establish them. The Board recommends that club representatives adopt USGA guidelines. Elements of such a program might include the following.

- First time violators who do not post a score or post an incorrect score will receive a warning letter. Note: The USGA does not recommend this preliminary step. They go straight to the imposition of a penalty.
- Second time offenders will have a penalty score posted in the computer with the letter "P." This penalty will be equal to the lowest of the last 20 scores for those who don't like to post their low scores. Conversely, the highest of the last 20 scores will be posted for those who don't like to post their high scores.
- Players who repeatedly do not abide by the handicap system will have their handicap index adjusted or revoked entirely.
- Remember - If you sign up to have the club maintain your handicap index and course handicap, you are consenting to peer review and compliance with the USGA Handicap System.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### USGA Handicap Index

#### **Know Your Index**

It's always a good idea to know how many strokes you have coming. To determine this, you need to start with your USGA Handicap Index. It's available in your club's handicap computer program and is expressed in the form of a whole number and decimal fraction. The computer generates a daily and monthly index. Remember: Your index is not your handicap. It simply leads you to the USGA Handicap Table (available in your pro shop) where you'll find your course handicap for the set of tees you intend to use.

#### **Check the Course Handicap Table**

Since your club's handicap computer program calculates your "home course handicap" you need not refer to the Handicap Table. However, if you play away from your home course, you need to know your handicap index to determine your handicap at the host course.

#### **How Many Strokes?**

The number of strokes you get or give depends on Course Rating and Slope and the type of game you're playing. For example, a handicap index of 13.0 will get you 14 strokes from the middle tees at Tantallon, only 12 at Leisure World, but 15 at Bowie. If playing a match from different tees, the golfer playing from the tees with the higher course rating gets extra strokes in addition to the difference in course handicaps. Note: The handicap limit for MISGA is 36 strokes.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## HANDICAPPING

### Recommended Handicap Allowances

In multi-ball team events, when full course handicaps are used, the results tilt in favor of the higher handicapper sides. So, to make all forms of play more equitable, golf organizations should use the recommended handicap allowances.

#### **Match Play**

Four-Ball (Better Ball of Two): The player with the lowest course handicap plays at scratch. The other three players receive 100% of the difference between their course handicaps and that of the low handicapper.

Chapman or Pinehurst: The partner with the lower course handicap receives 60% of his handicap. The partner with the higher course handicap receives 40% of his. Add the percentage allowances together before rounding, then round off the total with .5 or more rounded upward. The side with the higher course handicap receives the difference between the course handicaps of the two teams. The lower-handicapped side shall play from scratch.

#### **Stroke Play**

Four-Ball (Better Ball of Two): Players receive 90% of their course handicap.

Best Ball of Four: Players receive 80% of their course handicap.

Two Best Balls of Four: Players receive 90% of their course handicap.

Chapman or Pinehurst: The partner with the lower course handicap receives 60% of his course handicap. The partner with the higher course handicap receives 40% of his. Add the percentage allowances together before rounding, then round off the total with .5 or more rounded upward.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## (Sample 1st Time Notification Letter)

Date

TO: MISGA Golfer  
FROM: Club Rep (or Club Handicap Chairman)  
SUBJECT: Non-Posting of Scores (1st Time Notice)

The United States Golf Association requires member clubs to supervise its handicap system to ensure that all scores are posted.

Accordingly, posting performance was monitored by your Club Representatives on \_\_\_\_\_. We did not find a score posted for you, even though the records we reviewed indicate you played on that date.

We know that most failures to post are inadvertent and infrequent or that the player did not realize an 18-hole score should have been posted. Under these circumstances, the USGA recommends that a score be posted for the player. The score posted shall be equal to the best score in the player's last 20 scores.

However, we want to ensure you understand proper score posting requirements and procedures before we follow this USGA guideline. The next time you play, please stop by the Pro Shop and ask one of the golf professionals about basic score posting procedures or contact me. You can also obtain details about the subject on the USGA web site (<http://www.usga.org>).

Despite the care we take in our monitoring procedures, errors can occur. If you believe we are wrong in our conclusion, please contact me directly at \_\_\_\_\_. If there was an oversight on your part, we ask that you post the score as soon as possible. In the future, if we discover you are not following posting rules, you will receive written notification that a penalty score is being posted for you.

Sincerely,

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## (Sample Penalty Score Notification Letter)

Date

TO: MISGA Golfer

FROM: Club Rep (or Club Handicap Chairman)

SUBJECT: Penalty Score Notification

Your Club Representatives have already written to you this year about your failure to post a score and the penalty scores the USGA recommends when players do not follow its posting rules.

We now find that you failed to post a score on \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, we have posted a score for you. This score is equal to the lowest score in your scoring record and is identified with the letter "P" to denote that it is a penalty score. Additional posting failures will automatically be subject to such penalty scores. Repeated failure to post scores or otherwise observe the spirit of the USGA Handicap System can result in a reduction or withdrawal of your handicap index. Remember, when your club issues you a USGA Handicap Index, you agree to peer review – providing access to your scoring record and USGA Handicap Indices for inspection by fellow players and the club's Handicap Committee.

If you believe we have made an error and this score should not have been posted, please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ or e-mail me at \_\_\_\_\_.

I will respond and take any corrective action that is warranted.

Sincerely,

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## MISGAgam Article

### Get the Lead Out!

By George Donadoni  
Bay Hills

If you ask 20 different golfers which rule of etiquette is most often violated, you would probably get 20 different answers. But when you ask, "What about slow play?" they all nod and say, "Yeah!" And, strange as it may seem, no golfer ever admits that he is a slow player. It's always the other guy.

Slow pace of play is strangling the game of golf. Golfers are losing their patience and their rhythm. Clubs are losing money that could be put to use improving course conditions. Many players who would like to be on the course are deterred because of the length of time it takes to play a round.

We all know the usual recommendations to speed up the pace of play:

- keep up with the group ahead
- let faster players play through
- be ready when it's your turn
- line up your put while you're waiting for others to putt
- park your cart at the rear of the green
- walk briskly, and so forth.

One simple act: cleaning the club, replacing the head cover and jiggling the club back into the bag after every shot - multiplied by the number of shots and the number of players - can cost over 20 minutes in a single round! This time could be saved by hanging on to the club until you reach the point of your next shot or your cart-mate's next shot.

If you don't think slow play is a violation of the rules of etiquette, think about all those times you misplayed a shot because you have been waiting too long to make it. Let's play more attention to the pace of play, golfers. Be honest with yourself – repent and reform.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## MISGAgram Article

### Good Advice

Not that you're paranoid or anything, but the rumors are flying around the club that you're a genuine "sandbagger." There's talk about intentionally missed putts and the posting of only your higher scores. You seem to take pride in maintaining a higher handicap so that you can play better when "it really counts." There's a cure for what ails you, and it goes as follows:

**A basic premise underlies the USGA Handicap System, namely that every player will try to make the best score he can at each hole in every round he plays, regardless of where the round is played, and that he will post every acceptable round for peer review.**

Wouldn't it be nice if everyone followed this proposition.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## MISGAgram Article

### On Marking Your Ball

By Bill Brown

Piney Branch

Placing unique and personal markings on your golf balls is a very useful and practical practice for all golfers. By this simple action, you can speed-up play, avoid the embarrassment of hitting the wrong ball and the penalties that accompany this action. More importantly, a good personal mark on your ball precludes the need to touch it or lift it in order to identify it. Usually your ball can be identified as yours from several paces allowing you to get ready to hit the proper ball pronto. I have even had lost balls of mine returned after a round of golf because my "mark" was identifiable to others with whom I golf.

Marking your ball is a simple process. Use a permanent magic marker in the color of your choice. Put distinct markings on two sides of the ball usually on opposite sides of the logo. Be creative with your marks. The wife of one of the tour players is a graphic artist and draws elaborate pictures on her husband's golf balls. His lost golf balls are collectors' items.

Keep the marker in your golf bag. That way you can refresh marks on balls you've been using and newly found balls can be marked before putting them into play. If the marker is handy, you will find it convenient to apply your mark.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## MISGAgram Article

### Picking Up Your Ball and the Effects on Posting Scores

By Bill Brown  
Piney Branch

One of the most effective methods for speeding up play is the simple action of "picking up" when it becomes obvious that your ball will not count. This saves all the time spent lining up an insignificant putt and the actual action of putting the ball and getting it out of the cup.

The significant point here is that picking up does not eliminate a score for that hole nor does it cancel out the requirement to post the score for that round. The USGA allows you to post the most likely score you might have made on the hole. For example, if your ball is 20 feet from the hole in six strokes, picking up for a score of eight is within reason. This assumes that taking two putts from 20 feet is the most likely outcome.

Write down an eight on the scorecard. If necessary, you will need to adjust your score according to Equitable Stroke Control and post the adjusted score.

#### **Check List:**

- If your ball will not count, pick it up and put it in your pocket. We all have bad holes. Nobody wants to hear about you getting your money's worth or needing the practice. You may need practice, but please do it on your own time.
- Write the score you most likely would have made if you had continued play. Please don't get cute and miss that two-foot putt in order to maintain a higher handicap. You should strive to make the best score on each hole of every round you play.
- Post your score for the round after adjusting the total for Equitable Stroke Control (ESC). Please familiarize yourself with ESC for your handicap range.

# Maryland Interclub Seniors Golf Association

## MISGAgram Article

### Rules, Etiquette and Handicaps

By Sam Hall  
Tantallon

The MISGA Board of Directors believes there are signs that enjoyment derived from the MISGA golf experience is being spoiled by associates who casually apply the rules and etiquette of golf and fail to comply with the USGA Handicap System. Each year these issues are acknowledged as problems. People complain and much discussion ensues; however, little is done to correct them.

As a result, there are those who believe MISGA is developing a reputation as a golf organization with declining credibility, one not particularly interested in protecting the integrity of the game. The stated purpose of MISGA "is to foster friendships and camaraderie through" golf. We don't emphasize fanatical competition. We take a more casual approach to the game, but this is no reason to disregard the rules and etiquette of golf.

Seeing a need to "get involved," the MISGA Board formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Rules and Handicaps for the 2001 golf season. In turn, the committee developed a program intended to make MISGA associates mindful of the most violated and abused rules and etiquette of golf. Another goal is to get associates in the habit of posting scores in accordance with the USGA Handicap System.

The program will revolve around articles in the MISGAgram, postings on the MISGA web site, handouts, bulletin boards, golf professional briefings and reminders from club reps. In fact, the responsibility for carrying out the program will rest with each club rep. This does not mean that he will become the "Rules Czar" or the "Handicap Police." Your club rep will remain the same old likable guy you've grown so fond of. His job will be to inform you about rules, etiquette and the handicap program. You need to give him your utmost cooperation, particularly in the area of handicap compliance.

This program is not about the other guy. It's about you. There is not one single associate in MISGA who can say that he plays a round of golf without committing a rules, etiquette or handicap violation. Most errors are unintentional. If we are cognizant of what we do wrong, we can correct it. That is what this program is all about. Let's start playing by the rules, and by all means, let's make sure our handicaps reflect our playing ability. We'll all have a more enjoyable time. And MISGA will be viewed in a more favorable light by those who are thinking about joining.