

## **MARS LEAGUE PACE OF PLAY – 2021**

One of the biggest problems golf courses face is pace of play. Golf is no fun when golfers have to stand around waiting for the golfers in front of them. The golf courses lose patrons because of slow play. In fact, our league has lost members because of dissatisfaction with our pace of play. Each of us can and should be part of the solution to this problem. Staying caught up with the foursome in front, not just staying ahead of the foursome behind, is needed to enjoy our game. This is just part of the etiquette of golf plus it will ensure that our league will be able to continue to play at our current course. Broken Tee has an expectation that our MARS League group should be able to finish a round of golf in their expected time - less than 4 hours 20 minutes. Things may be influenced negatively by the groups that start ahead of our league.

### **Problems that cause slow play–**

- Lack of a "Pace of Play Mindset" is the biggest overall contributor to slow play for our league. The Mars League advocates that each player, when playing in Mars League events, focus on doing what is necessary to help your foursome stay in position behind the foursome ahead. Slow play invariably disturbs your concentration and that of your foursome. You will help yourself, your foursome, and the League if you keep focused on your game and remain aware of your position with respect to the foursome in front. Not doing what you have to do to stay in position during a round shows disrespect for your fellow players, the League, and the game!
- Looking for lost balls is by far the biggest time delay for our league. Do not spend more than three minutes looking for a lost ball. Have another ball ready and club selected in the event you do not find your ball. Realize that these three minutes will put you behind the foursome in front of you and this time must be made up. Our club rules provide options intended to reduce the time spent looking for lost balls. Do not spend time looking for extra balls. Get ready for your next shot!
- Too many practice swings. No more than one practice swing is recommended.
- Addressing the ball for more than five seconds - shorten your address and do mental prep on the way to your ball. Minimize your swing thoughts. You will play better golf.
- Marking every putt.
- Excessive time spent "reading" greens
- Inefficient placement of carts
- Too much time spent washing clubs and replacing head covers

### **Provisional Balls**

- If you suspect that a ball is out of bounds or that it may not be found you should hit a provisional. After looking for your ball for three minutes you can play the provisional. However, if you find the ball you must play it in accordance with the rules of golf as modified by our league rules.

### **Help Each Other**

- The time of year, time of day and the weather can make it difficult to see the ball after you hit it. We need to help each other. At the tee box everybody should watch everybody else's tee shot when practical. At least one other person should watch a tee shot. When practical, watch other shots for players in your foursome. If a ball is headed for the rough or a penalty area watch it roll out and get a line on it and try to identify a feature (bush, tree, etc) that helps locate the ball. If your ball is down the middle proceed to the next shot. You don't need to watch it roll out.
- Your responsibility is to find your own ball first if practical. However, you should assist other golfers whose ball is lost near your ball or on the way to your ball.
- Remind players of the three-minute lost ball limit.

### **Play Ready Golf**

- Minimize the time taken to hit the ball, from club selection to getting back in the cart.
- Think ahead. Begin planning your shot as you approach your ball.
- Be ready to hit your next shot when the course is clear for your distance. You do not need to wait for other golfers in your foursome. When you can hit safely, hit the ball. Do not worry about honors on the tee or distance from the pin.
- While waiting for another player in your group to hit, you should have completed your club selection, your mental prep and your practice swing (if not distracting).
- Begin reading the green as you approach it. While waiting for others to putt, you should be preparing for your putt. Do not walk all the way around your putt unless you can do it while others are putting without distracting them. This practice is very time consuming. Do not mark your ball unless it interferes with other golfers or requires cleaning. You can mark your ball using your putter head while cleaning. Aligning your putt with markings on the ball is acceptable – just do it once and stroke it. If you miss your putt, putt it out if you are ready. Do not mark your ball unless it interferes.
- You do not have to wait for all balls to be on the green to begin putting. If someone is off the green and late getting to the green or a player goes over the green and others are ready to putt go ahead. Use common sense.
- All putts within the leather (on a normal putter) are considered good.
- If some golfers have finished a hole proceed to the next tee box and tee off. The others will catch up before you leave the tee.

### **Cart Etiquette**

- Drive to the ball. Do not stop 20 yards short and walk to the ball and walk back.
- Whenever practical the driver of the cart should drop off the passenger and then go prepare for their shot. The passenger should take enough clubs to be certain that you have the right one. After hitting the shot begin walking to your ball. The driver then picks you up after hitting their shot. Sometimes it is faster to park midway between the two balls. Use common sense.
- When playing "cart path only", be sure to take enough clubs to the ball. Returning to the cart requires lots of time. Usually taking three clubs, the one you think you need and one on each side, is adequate.

- When approaching the green, it is often best for one player to take wedge(s) and putter and walk while the other player takes the cart to the back of the green.
- Put carts/golf clubs toward the next hole wherever possible so you can clear the green for the next group quickly. Similarly, do not enter scores at the green after finishing a hole. Instead, do it on the way to or at the next tee box. Clear the green as quickly as possible.
- Do not wash your club or replace head covers before getting in the cart. Instead take the club into the cart and wash it there if possible. Replace the club when you stop to retrieve the club(s) for your next shot. Leave head covers off until the round is complete.

A lot of these guidelines result in small savings. But they add up. If we assume, on average, we hit 100 shots per golfer and if each player in a foursome saved 6 seconds per shot each round of golf would be shortened between 10 and 40 minutes. Remember that for all of us to have fun and for the courses to be happy with our performance we must keep pace of play at the forefront. Pace of play is a mindset that we all need to develop.

### **Pace of Play Captain –**

- The low handicapper is considered the Pace of Play Captain for the foursome and is responsible for insisting on a proper pace of play. Be a leader, not a dictator. Respectfully remind those creating pace of play problems of possible impact on the whole foursome.

### **Pick up and catch up – This item is suspended until further notice**

- When more than one hole behind the foursome in front of you, except on a par 3 hole, the foursome picks up and catches up by proceeding to the next tee box. Being more than one hole behind is defined as walking onto a tee-box and seeing the preceding group has left the green for that hole and your foursome is behind the expected time printed on the scorecard. Each player in the foursome records the score for that hole as par plus their individual handicap for the hole. Remember, your place on the course is immediately behind the folks ahead of you, not ahead of the folks behind. For our league, some common sense should be applied here. If the group behind is not going to benefit, play on, always working to catch the group ahead. Most groups run into an occasional bad hole slowing them down. But they usually catch up within a hole or two. The pace of play captain for each foursome has the sole responsibility for making this determination. Course marshals also can and will require that a foursome pick up and move ahead one hole to catch up.

### **MARS Golf League takes Pace of Play very seriously**

- We have implemented the use of closer tee boxes.

**Are Penalties in Our Future?** – If we cannot meet our course's pace of play requirements, we will be required to penalize slow play. Paragraphs like the following could become MARS golf requirements.

- Penalty strokes will be assessed for slow play for the purpose of determining prize money, not for handicapping.
  - If a foursome finishes more than ten minutes later than the scheduled time, a one-stroke penalty will be assessed to each member of the foursome.
  - If more than 15 minutes late, a two-stroke penalty will be assessed.
- The co-chairs have the authority to adjust the penalty only if there are extenuating circumstances.

### **PLEASE FOCUS ON PACE OF PLAY**

Remember, we're sharing each round with friends and comrades. Some have less strength, mobility, and ability, but we want everyone to enjoy being together. Respect one another and look out for each other, helping each to enjoy their round (within the rules, of course).