

Etiquette: Then and Now

The etiquette of golf has changed little, basically, over the years; but the language in which it is couched and the clothes it wears have undergone a considerable upheaval.

Take the clothes it wore in 1901 as an example. Emily Holt's "Encyclopedia of Etiquette," published by Doubleday, Page & Co., in that year, prescribed the appropriate golfing dress for women thus:

"A woman's dress is invariably a severely plain wool, duck, or brown linen skirt falling to her ankles; a blouse, open-throated, of wash cotton or silk; a light wool sweater; rubber-soled, laced shoes of brown, black, or grey; and a straw or felt hat with brim jutting over her face, trimmed sparingly with a scarf or ribbon. In cool weather a short coat of the same goods as the skirt is 'de rigueur'."

Men, of course, were not so regimented, although it would seem that a man who appeared on the course without a lounging jacket would have a difficult time finding a playing companion.

If a golfer, man or woman, heeded the sartorial gospel, he had no need to worry about the skill with which he played the game. He had only to heed also the following rules of golf etiquette and memorize the dictated phrases to become a model golfing companion:

"1. A golfer may be too unambitious to learn to play accurately, too indolent or uninterested to master the rules of the game, yet the etiquette of the links cannot be forgotten or ignored, and the man or woman who, through ignorance or selfishness, fails in courtesy on putting or fair green is sure to be as swiftly condemned as one who makes a 'faux pas' in a lady's drawing room.

"2. It is no disgrace for a beginner to make short strokes and many of them do, or to use the wrong club at the wrong time, but it is considered as unpardonable a sin to speak or move when watching a fellow player make a drive as it is to attempt to play through

the game of persons who are ahead on the links.

"3. In teeing off, care must be taken that one's immediate predecessors from the tee are at least two good shots in advance; otherwise there is too great danger of injuries resulting, as well as confusion arising, from balls recklessly driven among nearby players.

"4. Golfers not playing together give each other a wide berth on the course, and an approach shot must never be made on the putting green until that space of greensward is quite clear. Putting is a delicate operation, on which success in the game often hangs, and the player, bending with intense concentration of mind, eyes, and muscle upon his ball, justifiably feels disconcerted and angered at the sound or sight of stray balls falling near. When by an error one plays on to a green not cleared, one should go forward at once and apologize for the intrusion.

"5. It is not unusual for rapid and skillful players to find their progress over the links greatly retarded by the slow and inaccurate. In such circumstances, the former have a right to ask permission to play through and ahead of the others, who, unless they are ignorant of golfing etiquette and most unfairminded as well, will gracefully accord this privilege, and rest their game a moment while the more expert players hasten on. It would be, in this event, even more polite and considerate for the slower players to volunteer this privilege, one of them perhaps saying: 'I see you are getting on very fast. Will you not play right through, we are in no haste.' With cordial thanks, the others should respond, saying: 'Thank you, that is very kind,' and immediately take advantage of the chance.

"6. When a man and woman play together, if no caddie can be secured, the man carries his companion's bag of clubs, gives her her irons and driver as she needs them, aids in looking for her ball when it flies far from the course, and forms her tees for her."