

How to Behave though a Guest

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It was the big day at the club. For weeks the members had been planning it—selling tickets, inviting friends, and generally whipping up this exhibition match. They had scraped together a \$500 guarantee for the Great Man. The Great Man had never before played in their town. It was an event.

The high point arrived. Out from the locker room strode the Great Man. Out to the first tee went this paragon of sport. He looked around once, then said loudly enough for everybody to hear:

"Where's the golf course?"

During a national championship Player X remarked that the course was a "cow pasture." The remark found its way into the newspapers. The remarker found his way into the Championship final. Remarkably, he won. Although both finalists were visitors from afar, the gallery was partisan. So enthusiastically did it side against Player X that the referee stopped the match and appealed to the crowd's sense of fair play.

A fairly sure way to win the animus of the average golfer is just to tell the world that you think his golf course ought to be exported to the steppes of Siberia. The average golfer is as sensitive in the golf course as in the threeputts department.

And not without reason. Doesn't the course represent the best his club has—the fruit of many members' devoted dollars and loving care? It may not be the best in the world, but it's the best he has.

Club an Extension of Home

He feels about his club somewhat as he feels about his home. After all, a club is, in a way, just an extension of one's home. That's why it's always surprising when golfers publicly criticize courses which entertain them. It's pretty much as if, having dined at a friend's home, they were to go on the radio and say: "Yes, Josh Smith has a nice house;

but his carpets are badly worn, and the steak was like a belt."

This is by no means an exaggerated comparison. A golfer visiting a club is a guest just as a friend visiting a home is a guest. It's just a matter of manners.

Of course, there are differences. When a club takes on a tournament, especially one to which the public may pay admission, it becomes quasi-public for the time being. It exposes itself to public view and public comment. But the player in the tournament is still a guest. He is there because the club has been good enough to give up its course for the tournament—its members have sacrificed time, effort, money and the good graces of their families to see that all is ready for the visitors' enjoyment.

Then, when a player says publicly that he'd rather be playing explosion shots in the Painted Desert, his hosts are bound to be at least puzzled. The next time they have opportunity to entertain a tournament, they—well, there probably won't be any next time for them. They've had enough.

Competing golfers are surely entitled to their opinions and to freedom to express them. But there is a destructive way, and there is also a constructive way. There is a public way, and there is a private way. Most club members would be receptive if a visitor went up to them and said: "That's really fine turf you've got out there. I like your par-4 holes. But about the sixth—wouldn't it be more sporting if you reduced the chance of cutting across the dog's-leg?"

A fundamental of golf is to take the course as we find it, and to play the ball as it lies. That makes things as fair for one as for another.

The question, then, involves sportsmanship. And sportsmanship involves simple courtesy—a due regard for the other fellow, as well as for ourselves.

Life would be jollier if we all used less criticism and more appreciation.