

LET'S HAVE MORE SCRATCH TOURNAMENTS

by

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THE average golfer rarely has an opportunity to play in a match play scratch event unless he has a "hot round" and qualifies for his own club championship, because practically all other club tournaments are played on a handicap basis. For the most part, match play scratch tournaments are limited to national, state, sectional and local title events, so that only the top players are able to enjoy this oldest and most exciting form of competitive golf.

The pressure for handicap tournaments comes naturally from the huge proportion of average players searching for some equalizer that will enable them to compete with better players on an equal level. It comes, too, from the fact that golf is peculiarly adapted to handicap competition. Calcutta pools were also responsible for the tremendous popularity of handicap tournaments.

Handicap Preoccupation

With the lack of scratch events to enter, some golfers naturally become quite preoccupied with their handicaps. They size up every event well in advance by evaluating their current ability and handicap. If they are off their game or playing above their handicap, they may decide to skip the event entirely or take great pains to justify an immediate increase in their handicaps through the Handicap Committee. On the other hand, if they are playing well below their handicaps, they eagerly anticipate the event and go out of their way to avoid any member of the Handicap Committee.

Handicap events by their very nature create a pressure on every player to maintain his handicap at a level where he can take on all comers. It is no coincidence that the following story was making the rounds

of the locker rooms this year. "It seems," the story went, "that there is a type of match called 'Denver' which consists of playing the first 15 holes in Nassau fashion, 5 holes at a time for the money, and the last 3 holes for handicap purposes!"

Match play scratch tournaments can be enjoyed by all golfers, the poor as well as the expert. Why not let the qualifying round do the job it was originally intended to do, that is, to sort golfers into flights of players with similar *current* ability? Bearing this conception in mind, the qualifying round serves the same purpose as a handicap. Therefore, why add another variable by imposing handicaps based on past performances of sometimes indefinite origin?

Average players qualified at scratch will get just as much if not more enjoyment and satisfaction from winning at their own ability level as they will from beating a better golfer with the aid of a handicap. At the same time, the better players will enjoy competing among themselves at scratch without having to give away shots as they are invariably called upon to do. Finally, your spectator membership will get more enjoyment from your events because they will have the opportunity of watching the best golf your club can produce in the finals at all levels of competition.

Consider Scratch Events

Consider scratch match play events for your club program this year. Popularize them with your members by offering prizes of equal value for all flights. All your players will enjoy head-to-head competition and your Handicap Committee will be extremely grateful for lessening the pressure on them to "Do something about my ridiculous handicap!"