

A GAME THAT CREATES HANDICAP INTEREST

By

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Three or four years ago at the Roanoke (Va.) Country Club we did not have a working handicap system because only a few players would turn in their scores. We attempted every possible method to get scores, but it seemed to be hopeless.

Without any thought of the consequences on handicapping, our pro Luke Barnes once urged some of us to try a new game. The game required the participants to have active, up-to-date handicaps, so only the few of us could try it. However, the results were electrifying.

The basis of the game is that a par on a hole counts two points, a birdie three and an eagle four. A score of one over par counts one. A score of two over par or higher counts nothing. On a perfect round of eighteen holes, a scratch player should make thirty-six points.

Now assume that a player's handicap represents the number of points he will lack for the perfect round. So, subtracting a handicap of ten from the thirty-six points, a ten-handicap player would have a goal of twenty-six points in an eighteen-hole round.

At the end of a round, the player totals the number of points made. By comparing the total to his goal, he will arrive at an adjusted total of a certain number of plus or minus points. The adjusted total is used to determine his standing with an opponent.

In a four-ball match the partners then simply combine their plus or minus totals with relation to their goal to get the standing of their side compared with their opponents.

We also often play one group of four against another. Here again, we simply add the plus or minus of one group and compare it to the other.

Another type of game for which we have no particular name rewards the individual who has the best relative point total for the round.

By dividing the twenty-six points of the ten-handicap player into nine-hole totals of thirteen points each, he is in a position to play a Nassau match. The determining factor then becomes how much plus or minus his point goal the player is on each nine holes and for the eighteen, as compared to his opponent.

The main thing in all of these different games is that they are played according to the "point system."

With the exception of a head-to-head match with someone of equal ability, this is the finest golf game I have ever played. The major reason is that it keeps every player in the game at all times, and the high-handicap player is just as important as the scratch player. Also, the game works just as well for any number of players—singles, four-ball, four versus four. Until one gets as high as two over par, he has the chance to make a point on a hole. Consequently, a player is working hard all the time and is not so likely to pick up.

With the small beginning within our group, the enthusiasm spread to other members of the Club, and they wanted to try the game. In order for them to do so, they had to put their handicaps on an active basis. Now, nearly everybody plays the game. Needless to say, our handicap system functions about as well as it could.

I honestly believe that, if this style of play could be popularized around the country, it would do more than anything else to create real interest in USGA Golf Handicap System.

The players at our club now anxiously watch the dates on which our handicaps are revised.

Few if any ever get through our golf shop after a round without turning in their scores. Either the player will want to turn his score in, or one of his "friendly" opponents will see that it is recorded.