

Avoid Temporary Memory Loss!

Many simple tasks in every round of golf greatly impact agronomics and playing conditions.

BY LARRY GILHULY



(Above left) Push back the turf that has been displaced once you remember to fix your ball mark. (Above right) Temporary loss of observational skills and driving where one shouldn't when the turf is stressed is immediately evident and can last a long time during the summer!

Let's face it, during a round of golf many different types of repetitive actions are made on each hole. These actions are not only with your golf clubs, but also include what you do before, after, and between every golf shot. The problem is that while a player's primary focus is on the shot itself and thinking about the next stroke, there apparently is a major issue with temporary memory loss in between shots. Read on to stir your memory on seven areas where temporary memory loss in your game can be detrimental to your golf course.

Your golf ball hit the green with force. Did it leave a mark? Of all the actions and reactions on a golf course that impact the agronomic and playing aspects of the game, the simple act of fixing your ball mark is the greatest. Unfixed ball marks require weeks to recover while severely compromising the smoothness of the putting surface. The few seconds it takes to bend over and push the displaced surface back and level with your putter is all that is needed. Repaired correctly, the ball mark will usually recover within a few

days, and a smooth putting surface is restored the moment it is fixed.

Divots — put it back after you hack. There is a feeling of fulfillment and, in many cases, wonder when one strikes a perfect shot. The ball hanging in the air against a blue sky is one of the great attractions of the game. However, at the same moment that this perfect shot and all the others occur, players often suffer from temporary memory loss and forget that a portion of the golf course has been completely displaced. Unfortunately, the divot created by the player often is left on the surface without being placed back into the scar, or sand is not used to fill the hole. From a playing and rules perspective, there is no relief from a divot. On the agronomic side, if the sand/seed mixture is not applied or the divot is not replaced, this scar will last for weeks. Unrepaired divots can quickly add up, resulting in entire turf areas becoming very difficult to maintain and to play. As with ball marks, you made the mess, so fix it.

Cart driving habits — many would have their license revoked if

golf cart driving rules were on the open road. How and where golfers drive carts is perhaps the greatest agronomic challenge faced by golf course superintendents. It is these four-wheel maulers that lead to the most turf damage a golfer can impose. It is not the single golf cart that causes all the problems, except during extremely wet, frosty, or hot days. Rather, it is the accumulated compaction and wear in highly trafficked areas that causes the most severe damage. Ropes, signs, and curbs offer varying degrees of success in minimizing damage from powered carts. In reality, it is the simple lack of attention that usually causes damage from golf and pull carts.

Park golf carts in the middle of the cart path rather than on the edge, avoid cutting corners on paths, pay attention to directional signs, and stay away from wet areas or drought-stressed turf. In the case of the latter two, your lack of observation will be immediately noticed.

Broken tees — "reel" damage can occur. The simple act of picking



Which bunker and what part of the bunker is “inconsistent”? Once determined, it can then be tested so sand may be added or removed.

up your tee or discarding broken tees into a receptacle completely eliminates the potential of damage to the reel of a tee mower. These seemingly innocuous aids to golfers can become lodged in a reel mower or knock it out of adjustment, resulting in needless time spent by the mechanic repairing the cutting unit. Since many of these same mowers are used on putting green collars, it can have a negative impact on cutting quality in this critical area, too.

So, do your mowers a favor and always clean the teeing surface when you are finished using it. The same goes when filling your divot with the sand mix on the tee. Make the extra effort to lean over and fill the divot only to the surface. Overfilling results in mowing through sand, which dulls cutting units.

Bunkers are inconsistent — which one(s) and specifically what part of the bunker? Golf course superintendents are constantly reminded of so-called inconsistent bunkers. However, when information is requested on specifically which bunker and what portion of the bunker, the answer is often “all of them.” It is very important to be specific when pointing out

inconsistency with bunkers, as certain areas within some bunkers can get very firm or very soft. Either way, the golf course superintendent needs to know exactly which part of which bunker needs to be addressed. Leave the bunker as good (or better) as it was when you entered it.

Hitting with or without noticing workers — major injury can occur in this area. Your impact on agronomic and playing conditions has been discussed in the previous examples, yet there is one area where physical harm

can occur to others. When you are standing on a tee or fairway and a maintenance worker is within reach of your shot, players should *always* defer to the maintenance worker and let him or her get out of the way. Hard hats are not nearly enough protection from an errant golf shot. A golf ball can cause serious injury when striking any area of the body. It may be irritating to wait a few seconds to proceed, but not waiting for a worker to finish and get away to a safe distance is thoughtless and dangerous.

Butts and ashes and seeds — oh my! While cigar and cigarette butts and ashes have always been a nuisance on putting greens, many courses now are seeing an additional problem — discarded sunflower and pistachio shells. Although they do not adversely impact the health of the turf or cause damage to putting green mowers, they do impact playability. There is a good chance that every shell that is discarded on the green or in the approach will have to be moved by a subsequent player. Not only does this slow play, no one wants to clean up such a mess. So, have some consideration for others.

We all make mistakes in our golf game in every round we play. But it is the mistakes made between shots that truly have an impact on the playability of the golf course. Stay alert, and you too will avoid temporary memory loss.

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Discarded shells from sunflowers or pistachios may blend into the primary rough but are a major problem when left on putting greens and shorter cut turf.