

Members - This email reports the culmination of almost a year's work and research by the Admiral Baker Board of Governors on making some changes in Policy for our golf events. The effort was to make some changes that would enhance the golf experience and, at the same time, result in a faster "Pace of Play" in our Blitz and Major Tournaments. Our tournaments are governed by the USGA Rules of Golf, The World Handicap System (WHS) , and the Admiral Baker Local Rules and the Admiral Baker Conditions of Competition for our events. We agreed that any change we were going to make must always take those four governing documents into account. Two of them, the Rules of Golf and the WHS are USGA directives that we must comply with while the others, our Local Rules and our Conditions of the Competition, can be modified by us to implement our agreed upon changes. Fortunately, we have an extremely knowledgeable Rules Chairman in Don Longacre and other Governors certified in the World Handicap System, plus Governors who have many years of experience in running golf tournaments and Golf Clubs.

During the past 12 months we have asked many Men's Club members for their ideas on how to improve the Pace of Play at our events. The answer covered a wide range of ideas, from "Just tell everyone to play faster," to "Relax the Rules to allow for faster play." Some Men's Club members, of course, are not as "fluent" with the Rules of Golf or the WHS as others but we listened to ALL ideas, which is why this effort took a year. You have probably seen the "observers" taking down notes and playing times during the past few Blitzes. At the November Board of Governors Meeting we consolidated our results and arrived at some "Policy" changes that we will closely monitor in the months ahead. There is a difference between a "**Rule**" and a "**Policy**," of course. A "Rule" is an edict that a failure to obey could result in a "DQ" in Stroke and Match Play, a "Loss of Hole" in Match Play, or the "General Penalty of Two Strokes" in Stroke Play. A "Policy" is a set of directions that is designed to enhance the goal of having golf at Admiral Baker Golf Course "Fun, Fair, and Fast." Just like those of you who are more "fluent" with the Rules of Golf know, there

are “**Exceptions**” to many “Rules of Golf” and similarly, there will be some “Exceptions” to our Policies. Knowing all the “**USGA Rules Exceptions**” is way above the heads of the average “Casual Golfer” and it takes multiple sessions at the USGA and SCGA Rules Schools to be conversant with them. (Fortunately, Don Longacre, I, and a few others have been frequent attendees at those schools). Understanding our “Policy” changes; however, just takes a nice dose of “Common Sense” which we fervently hope will be understood by all. That’s why we made sure that the Policy changes are easy to understand, comply 100% with the Rules of Golf, and don’t have immediate “Catastrophic Penalties” like DQ or 2 Stroke Penalties, or ‘Loss of Hole” if a Men’s Club player “forgets” to follow them.

So, let’s go right to the “2024 and Beyond Admiral Baker Men’s Club Policies:”

1. **Tee to the Edge of the Green.** We found that the handicaps of the players on a team, or if they walked or rode a cart, DID NOT have a big effect on “How fast they played. “Low” handicappers (0-9) are no faster, on the average, than “The Slightly Higher” handicappers (10-16) or even the “20 and above handicappers.” Likewise, the “Longer hitters – say, 200+ yd drives” did not play their round any faster than the “Shorter hitters.” Our research found that the Ladies Blitz (on Thursdays) frequently played 18 holes in 4 hours or less, and rarely over 4 hrs 15 minutes!!! We found that they just played “Ready Golf” throughout their round. There’s a lesson there. **Rule 6** “Playing a hole,” specifically **Rule 6.4b**, addresses the matter of who plays “After All Players Have Started a Hole.” It specifically states that players are both allowed and encouraged to play Ready Golf for both convenience or “to save time.” Also, as we all know, better “Cart Management” by both players in a cart can go a long way to “saving time.” There is no reason for a cart to go to one ball, the player gets out, gets his club, hits his shot, replaces his club, gets back in to the cart, then the cart goes a few yards (10, 20, 30, for example) where the

other player gets out, goes to the back of the cart, gets his club...etc etc. Now, of course, if one of the cart riders is “mobility handicapped” that could be an “Exception” to the “Better cart management” concept; but there are only a very few Men’s Club members who really are unable to walk a few yards instead of riding.

That brings us to the first **“POLICY:”**

A. Foursomes will play “Ready Golf” from the Tee to the edge of the green. An individual player who is ready to play before another player who is further from the hole may hit his ball so long as the player hitting does not “endanger, distract, or interfere with any other player. The key here is use “Etiquette, Courtesy and Communication” with your team mates.

We estimate that playing **“Ready Golf”** from Tee to the Edge of the Green can save about 1 to 1 ½ minutes a hole. Multiply that times 18 and we are talking about “saving up to 18 to 27 minutes a round.” That means about 4 hrs vice 4 hrs 20 min !!!!

- 2. On the Green.** Here is where we saw where some big “Time savings” can be made. Timing teams when they are all on the green has shown that A LOT of teams do the following: The member furthest away putts; he walks to his ball, fumbles in his pocket full of tees to find his ball marker; marks his ball; backs away. The member next “furthest away” putts, walks to his ball, fumble for his ball marker, mark his ball, walks away. (You see where we are going with this.....A LOT of seconds!!!) Now it is understood that “sometimes” the player actually makes his first putt (How nice is that!) but, on average, that just isn’t the norm. Of

course, there are a bunch of “Considerations” involved here. First, we are all rather “hesitant” to walk in someone’s “Line of putt.” However, since we are ALL wearing “soft spike golf shoes” and the greens are RARELY soaking wet where footprints are left on the green we have seen that footprints are not really an issue. Second, it is understood that a player who just missed his putt “sometimes” just wants to step back and “take a break” and think about his next putt. Guys – This isn’t the PGA Tour or US Open. Get up there and hit your putt. Third – Yes, we know that in Match Play it is somewhat more important to follow the “Who is away putts first” POLICY in the Rules of Golf; but we are talking here about the Blitz....i.e. Stroke Play, where you aren’t out to “Strategize your game to defeat your “opponent” (after all he IS your Team Mate in the Blitz.). Fourth – By not putting out there is a real possibility that your marker will interfere with your team mate’s line of putt; so you are asked to move it , then replace it after he putts (as time inevitably ticks away). By the time all four have putted and marked you can’t imagine how much time has elapsed. A KEY here is to **don’t wait till it is your turn to putt to line up your putt**. Be ready to go. If one player has a good chip/approach and has just a foot or two or three to the hole; let him putt first instead of marking his ball while accepting the accolades from his playing partners. The **most common words on the green should be “ I am ready to go – OK?** along with the usual “Nice Chip,” “Nice Putt,” “Aw Gee just missed,” etc etc etc.

This leads us to our next **POLICY:**

B. Continuous Putting. A player should putt out until his ball drops in the hole. He should be mindful of where the other balls are, and not twist his feet in their line of putt like he is in a Bunker, but if the green is dry, don't fret over lightly stepping in someone's line of putt.

We estimate that "Continuous putting" will save 1 to 1 ½ minutes (**at least**) per hole. Multiply that times 18 holes and guess what? There goes the 5 to 5+ hour round out the window when combined with the **"Ready Golf" Policy. We are now talking 4 hrs or less, and surely no more than 4hrs 30 min**

Now notice the **Policy** is that a player "should" putt out continuously. Sometimes it might not be the most convenient, so it is up to the individual player and the peer pressure from his team mates to do it as often as possible. Encourage your team mates to putt out !!!!!!!!!!!

3. **"GIMMEES"** Some members (especially those who have "some knowledge" of the Rules of Golf) suggested that we allow "Gimnee's" in our events. As just about everyone knows, "There have been no "Gimnee's at Admiral Baker." Yes, in Match Play a "Gimnee's" is totally acceptable and sometimes is a very wise "strategy" to invoke, and it cannot be revoked and the opponent cannot putt it until the hole has been decided. Additionally, some members "know" that the WHS does allow players to post "Most likely scores" for a hole where they do not hole out. That much is "Handicapping 101" (The Undergraduate level of Golf Knowledge). However, going to Handicapping 201 (Upper classes) and even "Post Graduate Handicapping" (only done at a USGA/SCGA Handicapping School where you must take a test and be "Certified" .. and we have three "Certified handicappers" at Admiral Baker Men's Club, by the way) explains how to decide what was your "Most likely score" if you pick up before holing out. Explaining all that in this email goes beyond our purpose here. It

involves the players' Handicap Index and the length of putt he has. For example, say that the current Club Champion Pat Weishan and I are both on the green, 6 feet from the hole. Play is called for some reason (lightning, downpour, Russian drone strike...whatever). What Pat puts down for his "Most likely score" is different than what I put down....according to the USGA Rules of Handicapping. Enough said (my Handicap Index is "somewhat higher" than Pat's) .

Most likely score is an individual matter and there is no way that allowing each individual to independently determine what his most likely score is when there are 130 players in a tournament is unreasonable. In our tournaments, Golf Genius automatically adjusts for "Net Double Bogey" when it posts your score. BUT – There is an "EXCEPTION" (there we go again!). In the Blitz most of our games are Formatted to "Take the best three Net or Gross scores on the following holes" So if, for example, one player is having a "Worse hole than usual" and wings two balls out of bounds while his three playing partners are all within the golf course property lines, and his score will obviously NOT be counted in the Team score for that hole, he can just pick up, put down a number at or greater than his "Net Double Bogey" score and Golf Genius will automatically post Net Double Bogey for him. Problem solved, no time wasted, no headaches. Besides, his bag is two balls lighter.

Finally – We fully recognized that there are significant things we can do to make golf at Admiral Baker "Fun, Fair, and Fast(er)." The Board of Governors hope that our two "Policies" of "**READY GOLF**" and "**CONTINUOUS PUTTING**" will help significantly reduce or maybe even eliminate the tiring "5 hr to 5 hr 30 min round" that always seems to crop up every Tuesday in some of the teams above Team #12. The "Players' Assistants" ARE the

Admiral Baker Marshals and they CAN and DO notify teams that are “Falling behind the goal time of 4 hrs 30 minutes or less.”

What you will see; however, is “from time to time” one of the Men’s Club Governors in a cart monitoring the Blitz, noticing teams that are not following the POLICIES above, and recording some key times. These “Governor Marshals” do have the authority to “Gently remind” teams that are slowing down the foursomes behind them. IF there are some teams that are consistent in “falling behind” either that day (every few holes) or week after week, then there are some “sanctions” that the Marshals and the BOG can impose.

We know that a MAJOR tradition of the Game of Golf is to have people with similar interests (Interests like making as many Pars or even Birdies as the Golf Gods will allow) enjoy playing and competing together. We **DO NOT** want to make our Blitz or any of our Tournaments a “RACE TO #18.” We just want EVERYONE to have a chance to play relaxed, be able to socialize with their fellow members, and get home before Rush Hour on Rt 15 and 805. We hope these Policies help in that effort.

See you on the Course!!!!

John Bepko
President