

# OH, BEHAVE!



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## THE DOCTOR IS IN

**N**ow that most everyone in the golfing community has gotten their hands on a new Rules of Golf book, hopefully we've all at least made it through Rule 1. If you have, you may have noticed that there is quite a bit of emphasis on the Standards of Player Conduct almost immediately in the book. Rule 1.2 reminds us that all players are expected to play in the spirit of the game by acting with integrity, showing consideration to others, and taking good care of the course. However, the Rules make it clear that there is no penalty for failing to act in this way, except that a player can be disqualified for acting contrary to the spirit of the game by committing "serious misconduct." In

other words, there are no consequences for bad behavior under the Rules, unless the player's conduct is so egregious that the Committee has no choice but to disqualify them. If this sounds familiar, that's because it was true under the old Rules, as well as the new. So why, you may ask yourself, am I talking about a Rule that hasn't changed for this year?

That's because the Rules of player conduct can change in 2019, but those changes are up to you! For the first time, the Committee now has the right to institute a Code of Conduct as a Local Rule, meaning that disqualification isn't necessarily the only option for a player who is not behaving in appropriate ways. You, the PGA Professional who is likely the Committee for competitions and general play at your club, now have the right to apply a one-stroke penalty or the general penalty for misconduct on the golf course. However, if you wish to assign penalties for certain behaviors at your course, you do have some responsibilities, and homework to do before changing the penalty structure regarding player conduct.

Before writing your Code of Conduct, here are some of the things you'll need to consider (and once these decisions are made, be sure to put them in writing as part of the Code!):

- Who will have the authority to decide penalties and sanctions? Is it only certain Committee members, or is there a minimum number of Committee members who need to be involved in the decision? Does any member of the Committee have the authority to decide unilaterally?
- Will there be an appeals process?
- What behaviors will be prohibited? Some examples of conduct that may be included:
  - o Players entering specified no-play zones
  - o Failure to rake bunkers, fill divots, fix ball marks
  - o Unacceptable language
  - o Abuse of clubs or the course
  - o Being disrespectful to other players or officials/staff
  - o Failure to meet the dress code
- Does the Code apply to caddies (can the player be penalized under the Code of Conduct for the actions of his or her caddie during the round)?

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- What will the penalties be for breaching the Code? You have a great deal of latitude in determining penalties for various behaviors, and you can structure those penalties in almost any way you choose. Some examples of things to consider:

- o Will there be a warning system before any penalties are applied?
- o Will the penalty for each breach be one penalty stroke, the general penalty, or will penalties escalate with each breach?
- o Will a penalty automatically apply whenever a player breaches the Code of Conduct, or will it be left to the Committee's discretion?
- o Will different penalties apply for breaching different aspects of the Code, or will there be a set penalty structure no matter what aspect of the Code is breached?

Here's a sample penalty structure for a Code of Conduct, but as explained above, you have the authority to modify this in many ways:

- ◆ **First breach of the Code of Conduct**
  - o Warning
- ◆ **Second breach**
  - o One-stroke penalty
- ◆ **Third breach**
  - o General penalty
- ◆ **Fourth breach or serious misconduct**
  - o Disqualification

This newfound ability to institute a Code of Conduct as a Local Rule is another great example of the USGA and R&A's efforts to afford the Committee more flexibility in how we run our golf tournaments, or even everyday play at our clubs. I just wanted to make you all aware of one of the new tools you have at your disposal, that you can use to motivate your golfers to take better care of the course, preserve the image of the club that they represent, and ensure that all of their fellow golfers are being treated with respect. Please refer to Section 5H in the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf for more info, or as always, reach out to me at any time for help.



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## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF GOLF

WE ARE GOLF unveiled its U.S. Golf Economy Report

### ACTIVITY DIRECTLY DRIVEN BY GOLF

\$84.1 Billion in 2016, a 22% rise from \$68.8 Billion in 2011. The golf industry supported \$191.9 Billion in total annual activity, including 1.89 million jobs and \$58.7 Billion in wages and benefits.



### \$34.4 BILLION REVENUE FROM COURSES, CLUBS, RESORTS OTHER FACILITIES

\$1.9 Billion invested in existing golf facilities

### \$25.7 BILLION IN TOURISM SPENDING IN 2016

4.6% Compound Annual Growth Rate since 2011



### \$7.2 BILLION IN NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION IN GOLF COMMUNITIES

18.5% Compound Annual Growth Rate since 2011

### \$6 BILLION IN SALES OF EQUIPMENT, APPAREL AND SUPPLIES

\$2.4 Billion in professional tournaments, associations and player endorsements



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