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NOTICE REGARDING PRACTICE AT THE SECTION CHAMPIONSHIPS

Before we know it, the Section Championship, Senior Championship, and Assistants Championship will be upon us. With these being multi-day tournaments, I'd like to refer you to a very important item on the NEPGA Hard Card, which will affect any tournament played over more than one round. While the new Rules of Golf allow players to practice on the competition course between rounds, as long as they have completed play for that day, the NEPGA Hard Card utilizes the Local Rule that prohibits players from doing so. Therefore, a player **MUST NOT** practice on the course before or between rounds, even if they have completed their final round of that day. Remember that for the purpose of this Rule, practicing on the course means playing a ball, or testing the surface of the putting green of any hole by rolling a ball or rubbing the surface. This restriction during our Championships is crucially important, because the penalty for the first breach is two strokes, and the player is disqualified for the second breach.

THE RULES OF FOUR BALL STROKE PLAY

With the annual Pro-Pro Stroke Play Championship right around the corner on July 22nd, now is as good a time as any to brush up on the Rules of Four Ball Stroke Play. While many of the Rules in this format are the same as general stroke play, playing with a partner introduces a few advantages, as well as a few complications.

The most common problem we see in our four ball competitions time and time again is incorrectly filled out scorecards. Please remember in four ball, each score on the scorecard must be identified as the score of the individual partner who made it. A single score on the team score line is not good enough, we need to know which player made that birdie! It would serve all players to be very careful with this, because the penalty for attributing a score to the wrong player is disqualification.

The advantage to four ball play is that the partners have the opportunity to work together in many respects, and act on each other's behalf. For instance, partners may exchange advice throughout the course of the round, either with each other or either of their caddies. Partners may also act on each other's behalf in many ways. For instance, your partner may mark the spot of your ball and lift, replace, drop and place your ball. Fair warning though, if your partner makes a procedural mistake while doing any of these things, the penalty will be on you!

One issue that's been in the news this spring is backstopping. The backstopping Rule applies among partners as well - what this means is that you and your partner must not make an agreement to leave a ball in place on the putting green to help either of you, or any other player (i.e. use the ball as a backstop). So while you and your partner are allowed to play in the order that you choose, and may use many strategies to help each other out, be very careful that you don't agree to leave a ball on the putting green in place to help each other out, or you will each get a two stroke penalty.

I hope to see many of you at the Pro-Pro Stroke Play Championship, and I hope this helps you stay on the right side of the Rules in that format. For more information about the intricacies of Four Ball, you can refer to Rule 23 in the Rules of Golf. As always, feel free to reach out to me for clarification on this topic, the Rules in general, and the NEPGA Tournament Program. I'm always here to help.

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