

# Hole condition depends on etiquette

The golf course maintenance department sometimes receives complaints about the condition of the holes on our putting greens. The most common complaint is that a golfer believes that the area around the cup is raised, causing their ball to veer away from the hole. Every complaint is investigated and if we are told an actual green on which the problem occurred, we go out and make putts at that particular hole to see for ourselves.

We move the holes 7 days a week during the golfing season and as often as needed in the off season. When our hole placement man leaves a green, the hole is in perfect condition. We use industry standard tools to insure a perfect hole and cup insertion. What happens to the hole over the course of day is out of our hands. With 200 people playing on a normal summer day, the condition of the hole can change.

Raking the ball out of the hole with a putter head is probably the most common occurrence that changes the condition of the hole. A putter head can hook the cup and with an upward tug the liner is pulled, causing the ground to “pooch up” around the hole. The shaft of a putter will also damage the fragile soil, or push up turf around the lip of a cup. Raking your ball out of the hole with a putter head is very poor golf etiquette. The hole needs to be left undamaged for following group.

Footprints in extreme proximity to the cup can also cause hole damage. A heel impression on the edge of the hole will cause putts to go off line. When retrieving a ball, a golfer’s foot should never get any closer than 12 to 14 inches from the hole.

Another action that can adversely affect the condition of the hole is the way in which the flagstick is handled. If the flag is pulled out on an angle it can hook the cup and raise the surrounding turf as it is trying to be pulled out. A flagstick should be lifted straight up and out of the hole and gently laid to the side. Hole damage can also occur when the flag is reinserted into the hole. If a golfer’s aim is a little off, the ferrule of the pole can damage the lip of the hole.

Holes that have 200 balls retrieved out of them, 400 feet walking around them, and at least 50 flag removals and reinsertions each day are going to receive normal damage over the period of a day. That is why we move them so often. Each morning begins with perfect holes. Their condition at the end of the day depends on the golfers. Before you blame your next missed putt on the hole placement man, think about how many golfers have played that hole before you got there.