

## Late to the tee party?

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**H**ave you ever been late for your starting time? If you have, you know that there's a severe penalty. It's tough to start a round two strokes before taking your first swing. Imagine driving a few hours while fighting morning traffic, only to arrive late to the tee. You're disqualified, you don't get to play golf and now you probably have to go in to work. Now that's a car ride home I never want to have.

Rule 6-3a states that the player must start at the time established by the Committee. This short and simple rule is breached often, but a lot of the time it's not the player's fault. As residents of Southern California we can come up with plenty of excuses: the traffic, getting lost on the way to the course, major accidents on the highways and car breakdowns are all reasons for being late.

I'll sympathize with you, but the *Rules of Golf* are not going to cut you a break. Under Decision 6-3a/1.5, the only circumstance which warrants waiving the disqualification penalty would be if the player was present at the scene of an accident and provided medical assistance or was required to give a statement as a witness. When it comes to all other circumstances, the decision states that it is the player's responsibility to ensure enough time to reach the course and the player must make allowances for possible delays.

The penalty for being late for your starting time is disqualification. However, the SCGA, USGA, CGA, PGA Tour and the majority of tournament bodies across the country adopt the Note under Rule 6-3 into their conditions of competition. The note provides that if a player arrives

at his starting point, ready to play, within five minutes after his starting time, the penalty for failure to start on time is loss of the first hole in match play or two strokes at the first hole in stroke play (instead of disqualification). If the player arrives after five minutes, he is disqualified.

I've had many players ask to clarify when someone is late to the tee. Decision 6-3a/2.5 provides guidance on what is meant by "Time of Starting." It states that if a player's starting time is 9:00 a.m., he needs to be at the tee present and ready to play at 9:00:00 a.m. If the player arrives between 9:00:01 a.m. and 9:05:00 a.m. he will be penalized. If the player arrives

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after the five minute stipulation (9:05:01 or later) he is disqualified.

Sometimes luck is on the side of the late player. Decision 6-3a/4 describes when a player is late to the tee but unable to play due to some delay. A player assigned to a 9:00 a.m. starting time arrives to the tee at 9:06 but because the fairway is not clear to tee players off, the starting time is delayed. Since the group was unable to start at the time originally established by the Committee and the player arrived before it could do so, the player is not in breach of the rule.

The best advice I can give to players is to give yourself plenty of time to get to the course. When you're at the course, get to your assigned tee 10 minutes ahead of time. The SCGA uses atomic clocks at the starting tees, which are the official time for the day. The times on these clocks may be different from those at the driving range and in the clubhouse so make sure you

are aware of the official time as you get closer to teeing off.

**ON ANOTHER NOTE...**

As our 2005 tournament season winds down I would like to thank all clubs who have hosted SCGA, USGA and CGA events this year. Their support and cooperation helps make our tournament program such an exceptional service to our members. The SCGA conducts more than 100 events each year, thus requiring the full support of our member courses to host this extensive program. Those clubs that do step up and host events support amateur golf, give their club a chance to be exposed to top-flight competition and, perhaps in some cases, generate a little revenue. We all owe a large debt of gratitude to them.

While on this subject, players should remember that when they play in our events, they are ambassadors of the SCGA. You and the other contestants are guests of that club, and your conduct should reflect that, in dress, in behavior and in manners, on and off the course. Remember that, while the SCGA has a dress code, a host course may have additional requirements and it's up to the players, their caddies and the gallery to read the *Player Information Sheet* ahead of time and know what those are.

Finally, the SCGA follows the Etiquette section set forth in the Rules of Golf which states, "All players should conduct themselves in a disciplined manner, demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at all times, irrespective of how competitive they may be." Any type of unsportsmanlike conduct or serious breach of etiquette (profane or abusive language, damage to the course, throwing of clubs, etc.) will not be tolerated and will result in a "one way ticket home."

We are proud of our courses and players. Thank you for upholding the traditions of this fine game and making the SCGA one of the finest associations in the country.