

Unbecoming conduct and the “82 flu”

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It would be difficult to count the number of times we have sat at the scoring area and seen a competitor limp in, hand us a scorecard and provide us with a medical synopsis of why he just made three straight double bogeys. The question we continually ask ourselves is, “Did his back hurt his score, or did his score hurt his back?”

I’d like to touch on two SCGA tournament policies that apply directly to the values of this game we love so much, values that include demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at all times and completing all rounds which you start. The policies I will be focusing on is our *Withdrawal Policy* and *Player Code of Conduct Policy*. Whether it’s throwing a club in disgust, slamming your club into your golf bag or leaving the course halfway through your round because of poor play, we’ve seen it all and it’s not acceptable.

The SCGA Withdrawal Policy applies both to withdrawals prior to the start of an SCGA competition and during an SCGA competition. If you need to withdraw prior to the competition, you must notify the SCGA Rules and Competitions Department by telephone, email or through the cancellation link on the SCGA web site. We understand that work, health or personal issues may cause you to have to cancel from a scheduled tournament and that is okay. However, we ask that you notify us as soon as possible and at least one business day prior to the event. Failure to notify the SCGA will subject the player to suspension from future SCGA competitions. A player who only contacts the course and not the SCGA will be subject to the suspension.

The following policy applies for withdrawals during a competition: All players are expected to

complete the competition which they start. Acceptable reasons for withdrawal during a competition are physical injury, illness or an emergency. **Poor play is not an acceptable reason for withdrawal.** A player who withdraws without an acceptable reason or without notifying SCGA personnel will be subject to suspension from future SCGA competitions. If a player is aware of a possibility of withdrawal (e.g. injury) he should notify the SCGA as soon as possible and before pairings are announced for the next day.

All players who start a round must return a scorecard personally to SCGA staff or an SCGA official even if they are officially withdrawing. We would hate to issue a search warrant for you just because you mysteriously vanished off the 12th green without informing someone. Players who do not follow this policy will be subject to suspension from future SCGA competitions. Players who withdraw also must sign and attest that the hole-by-hole scores are correct for the fellow-competitor’s scorecard they were keeping and return that card to the fellow-competitor or another marker in the group.

To withdraw for any other reason is not considered in the *Spirit of the Game*. We consider this a serious infraction as all competitors are required to complete all tournaments in which they participate. It is not acceptable to come down with the “82 flu,” a bad back, tennis elbow, or any other phony excuse. Whether it’s at a championship or a qualifier, you are taking the spot of another player that would love to be playing and completing an entire round. When a player walks off the course, he may think he’s doing us a favor, when in fact he is causing a domino effect of potential problems. Withdrawing causes administrative burdens on tournament officials as we have to shuffle groups or find a playing marker. It is also unfair to the fellow competitors who may also

not be playing well but will complete their round. Players who don’t turn in a score card cause administrative problems as the officials at the scoring area are left waiting for the missing card while trying to close the competition.

So now we’re clear on the withdrawal policy and you’re committed to playing a complete round in an SCGA competition. That brings me to our next policy to discuss: the *SCGA Player Code of Conduct*.

I think we all agree that sometimes our anger gets the best of us. However, we need to control that anger when we are on the course. There is no place for unsportsmanlike conduct in the game of golf and especially at SCGA competitions. When players throw clubs, there are safety concerns and the potential for golf course damage to occur. All of our competitions are held at private clubs and public courses at which we are guests and must adhere to the policies and expectations of the host facility. Often times members will come out and watch the competition as well. SCGA tournament participants are representing the SCGA, and any unsportsmanlike conduct on the course could cause us not to be invited back to that club again.

Incidents of unbecoming conduct or actions deemed to be detrimental to the image of the SCGA or the *Spirit of the Game* are grounds for removal from the competition and suspension from future SCGA-administered competitions. Ultimately when you enter an SCGA competition you are expected to make that your focus for the day and to adhere to our tournament policies and the *Spirit of the Game*. We want your tournament experience to be enjoyable, competitive and challenging and to do so we need the cooperation of every participant to conduct themselves to the high standards the SCGA expects from its members. Complete SCGA Tournament Policies can be found at www.scga.org and on page 27.