



Letter to the Editor – Golf Scheduling

Description

The following email was sent to Hot Springs Village People on Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

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I moved back to Hot Springs in January 2019 and immediately purchased a lot because I'm a golfer. I pay my POA dues in a timely manner, my taxes, and all fees as I should. Please explain why I am treated like a second class citizen when I want a tee time.

All of the supergroups get 4, 5, multiple blocks of tee times and leave the individuals to have to accept early or late times or now cold or colder tee times. Every time I call as an individual to book a tee time it gets silly. If you are going to block off the decent times to the groups make someone for each foursome have to call within 48 hours, charge each person an additional fee for prime time and reduce the bad times by that amount of money for each tee time but your current system of giving these groups priority and screwing the rest of us is just downright wrong.

Signed,

J. T.

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Asking several golfers, Hot Springs Village People was told that HSV's golf scheduling policy is not common golf practice anywhere except here in HSV or some country clubs. We are not a country club, but for the most part, golf here operates like we are.

It is a problem for many reasons.

What happens is that an individual property owner golfer (let's call him the 'Captain' of the group) creates their own 'group' of friends and neighbors who like to play together. They have a particular day

of the week on which they like to play, every week, all year long. Typically these 'groups' are little mini-tournaments, and the players chip in a few bucks (sometimes bigger bucks too) to play each week, scores are kept, and prize money dolled out at the end. Typically, the time slots the 'groups' want are the choice ones somewhere between 8 am and noon, Monday through Saturday, depending on the season.

Generally, most of the group members are annual players, but many are daily pay players as well. These groups may have 20 or 30, more or less, regular participants. The 'Captain' reserves between two and six sequential tee times at the earliest opportunity to do so each week, depending on who he thinks might want to play that week. The so-called Village "lottery" system is used to do this, but the golf department helps out to give some priority in some cases.

Obviously, those tee times are then blocked from the day the reservation is made. As the day approaches, the 'Captain' (if he is a good one) polls the group members to whittle down who is actually going to play that week or not. As the time gets to a day or two before 'play day' the good 'Captains' then go into the system and cancel out reservations as needed. Likely though, some of the 'Captains' don't do this. So, while there might have been six reserved foursomes, it might whittle down to only three.

Then, on 'play day,' regardless of whether the 'Captain' adjusted the numbers or not, it is not unusual for one or two or more of the players to not show up. Some call the morning of or the day before to cancel; many don't. This is due to many reasons, including weather, cart-path-only, unexpected events, not feeling well, etc. It is not unusual for (assuming three tee times remaining) that each time slot goes off with only three players each instead of four. Sometimes a complete tee slot or two is totally unfilled.

The pro shops seldom try to fill out the foursomes missing a player or two. This is mostly because there is little advance notice and because there is generally no 'single walk-on' type players just showing up at the course hanging around waiting to play. This includes Villagers and outsiders because, of course, we never advertise our golf to the public – a long-standing policy. Also, the pro shops generally have no idea who out of any scheduled foursome will actually show up (or not), so if someone calls in at 8 am wanting a single spot, they are told "all booked till after 11:30" or whatever.

This system has been part of HSV standard practice forever. It is commonly accepted as normal. Most property owner golfers who play more than occasionally belong to at least one such group. So, what's wrong with this picture?

1. Foremost is the fact that, despite published so-called standard practice and warnings, the golf department never charges anyone for a "no show" if they don't show up. Money lost, obviously.
2. Other Village players are disenfranchised because they can't just go out and play when they might otherwise want to do so. Money lost again.
3. Having various groups playing with two or three rather than four players in a "foursome" screws with the pace of play, which can cause others ahead or behind to be affected, feel pressured, or whatever. While we have Marshalls who are supposed to manage this issue they basically have no authority and can do little or nothing.
4. The system favors the 'groups' property owner players at the expense and inconvenience of all the other occasional (typically daily pay) property owner players, not to mention those members of the public who might want to play golf here and help us pay our bills.

5. This wouldn't be a problem if everyone in the Village was an 'annual,' but that's not how it is. We have only about 500 or so 'annuals.' One key here is the failure of the POA to charge a "no show" fee to everyone who does not show up. Another key is the basically dysfunctional pricing system we have here, including the 'annual' program.

6. While this practice goes on unabated, it is also noteworthy to note that at the same time, POA Golf Department is unwilling to accommodate neighborhood groups that want to block out part of a morning or afternoon so that a neighborhood scramble tournament can be held. Usually, these 'scrambles' bring out those occasional players that don't even play otherwise – money the POA could use. Usually, the scramble organizers get little help and little or no priority in scheduling from POA Golf.

When you look at the mix of who plays golf, resident daily rounds account for 59% of rounds; annual play rounds represent 29%; public rounds at 8%; tournaments and packages represent 3.7%; it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out something is seriously wrong here.

This issue is just part of why HSV golf has been failing for decades and losing millions of dollars every year.

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Author

lynn

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