



MAKING THE RULES

Ray Burniston wrote about reviewing the Club Rules.

Secretary At Work: April 2000 (reviewed May 2011)

Membership

You need to define who is qualified to be elected or join. In most cases this will mean male and female. Categories of membership must be defined such as Full, Five Day, Junior, Social etc. It is best to include both male and female in each one and to make sure their privileges for their category of membership are the same.

Voting rights must also be the same and many clubs these days give these rights to five day and in some cases social/non playing members. You should state clearly any restrictions in playing the course for playing members ie full members of both sexes would have no restrictions but five day members would only be allowed to play under their membership fee from Monday to Friday.

Temporary members also come under the category of membership because they enjoy certain rights when playing the course and these should be explained in the rules. Privileges of membership should be clearly stated to guests of members and to monthly or quarterly members if appropriate.

Applying for Membership

This would normally consist of a Proposer and Seconder. It must state how long they have been a member before they can propose potential members. Often a letter of introduction from each of their sponsors is required. In some cases the applicant must obtain the signatures of at least say five members of the club supporting the application. A female is entitled to propose a male and vice versa.

The procedure for election at the Committee/ Board meeting should be stated along with the majority required to vote in favour. Most clubs will interview prospective members and this fact should be stated.

Waiting Lists

If the club operates a waiting list then they should set out the policy on dealing with applications. In some cases clubs have a points system on handicaps, previous membership and age.

Entrance fees

These may vary for different categories of membership ie Full or Five day, and the policy on how they are set must be stated. This would normally be by the committee. Most clubs have a policy for Junior Members when they become adults regarding the amount they pay and this should be clearly set out.

In some cases the committee may have the right to waive these in certain instances. If this should be the case then it must be included. It does not have to state the actual reasons why.

Subscriptions

The policy on how subscriptions are decided must be clearly stated along with if the committee can set either to a rate not exceeding 10% or less. The rules must clearly state the date they are due and whether notice is sent to members requesting payment or not. So that members are aware of the consequences, the time allowed for payment and the policy followed on non-payment of subscriptions must also be clear.

Resignations

There should be a rule stating that members wishing to resign must do so before a certain date, otherwise they could be liable for the full fee for the subscription year. In some cases clubs will allow a member resigning through personal reasons a refund of part of their subscription paid for the year. In most cases it is best to leave the rule stating 'at the discretion of the committee' rather than commit the club.

Cessation of Membership

The rules for expulsion must be clearly set out and these must clearly state the procedure the committee must take. The procedure for suspending a member for a set period must be again clearly defined and different rules for playing and social/non playing membership.

The English Golf Union sets out the rules of suspension/expulsion in their handbook for playing members. Clubs under their jurisdiction would be wise to incorporate these.

Conduct of Members

These rules should cover areas such as courtesy and consideration to other members along with the care of the facilities with some reference to the etiquette of golf. It is normal for members to be reminded that they should under no circumstances give orders or reprimand club employees but any complaints are to be made to the Secretary. It is a good idea in this day and age to point out that conduct detrimental to club may well involve the member in expulsion or sanctions such as suspension.

Guests

These rules will involve guests both on the course and within the clubhouse. If there is a restriction on the number of times a member may introduce a guest both on the course and clubhouse then this should be clearly set out. Also it should state the number of guests a member may sign in on the golf course at one time. Some clubs allow a member to sign a maximum of three guests at any one time providing he/she is playing with them.

If the club has a rule about the number of guests a member may sign in during the year then this must be stated along with how it is administered if it is by vouchers. Any restrictions on guests at weekends must be stated although this may be included in the club by-laws along with restrictions if any on the use of the snooker room etc. These restrictions should include both sexes and there should be no further restrictions on females at weekends.

Most clubs have rules allowing visitors to play the course on payment of the appropriate green fee and licensing authorities, in the case of a private members club, will normally grant them the right to purchase drinks under the Club Premises Licence. There is normally a rule allowing temporary members to use the facilities of the club providing they give forty-eight hours notice. This rule would cover societies, company golf days, open/invitation days and club matches.