



MEMBERS: DRESS RULES

Ray Burniston suggests ways of addressing golf club attire, detailing the do's and don'ts for golf club secretaries.

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There is probably no area which causes more arguments, and in which clubs often shoot themselves in the foot, than trying to implement a dress code both on the course and in the club house. Often late at night at the end of a committee meeting a member will suddenly bring up the question of dress. A rule is then passed which you know as secretary is unworkable but the committee will not heed your warning and with a weak chairman the new rule is passed. Within days all hell breaks loose at the club and eventually the committee have to eat humble pie and admit they have made a mistake.

Unfortunately in these days of rapid communication if governments get it wrong - and they often do - any change of policy is seized by the media as weakness. What happens next is what is known as a 'U' turn although often this is seen by many as plain common-sense. In the same way, some members will get at the club committee for changing their mind. Try to avoid instant decisions by committees late at night because they invariably lead to bad decisions. If possible get a rule passed by the committee that no decisions can be made unless the item is on the agenda. At least the item can then be put on the agenda for the next meeting so that some research and discussion can take place beforehand.

In many ways proprietary clubs have an advantage over private members clubs because they are able to form a code which is in line with the way they wish the club to operate. Generally they expect smart casual dress and certain guidelines on the course but that is the end.

In private clubs the code will often depend on the whims of the committee at the time who are not always indicative of the majority of the views of the membership. How often have you been made to use the small bar at a club because you are casually dressed and find the large lounge area has nobody using it because the dress code say jackets, collars and ties after 6.30 pm or so.

Out on the course the wearing of shorts has created many problems for officials in clubs. One sees all sorts of different rules at clubs on this matter, in which many are impossible to control and make the club officials look stupid. Rules and regulations are fine providing they are generally accepted by members and can be enforced. The following notes may help you for guidance before deciding on any dress code.

1. Try and obtain an idea of what the membership want and are prepared to support. A brief survey of the membership might well establish this.
2. Study other clubs in your vicinity and speak to the secretaries who may give you some idea of what they have tried in the past. Try and learn at least from their mistakes.
3. Be wary of going backwards, if you had a period of relaxing the dress codes it will be very difficult to start trying to enforce tougher rules. A quiet chat with members taking advantage of the rule may suffice.
4. Most members who have to wear jackets and ties at work change into something casual when they reach home. Will they really want to change back again to have a drink in their club? Casual dress and wearing of ties has changed dramatically in recent years and golf clubs will have to adapt to these changes.
5. Remember to outline the dress code required at the club to those in societies, company golf days, open meetings and social events.
6. Any dress code on the course should be kept along the lines adopted at most clubs (which may ban jeans and trainers) but remember lady golfers have different dress codes to men.
7. Shorts are generally accepted at most clubs but try to avoid making rules and regulations, which will be almost impossible to enforce. A pair of shorts suitable for football or squash should not be acceptable for golf. There are a host of smart tailored shorts on the market these days so try and encourage your professional to stock some.
8. In any leaflets you produce about the club for new members and visitors set out briefly any dress code and remember if the committee change it part way through the year you may well have a problem.
9. Try to learn from past mistakes by the committee so that they are not repeated.