



WINTER GOLF – PART 2 THE WINTER COURSE

This is the second in a series of three articles written by David Weston.

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This article is the second of three considering various aspects of winter golf.

Preparation for Winter Golf

It is the responsibility of the owner/management/Board of Directors to appreciate the demand for winter golf and make both short and long term preparation to provide for it. It is no longer acceptable to mark a 3m circle on the fairway and cut a 6 inch hole cup in it, or move the tee markers onto the start of the fairway. Members expect and deserve better. The Green Committee should be tasked with devising a winter-play pattern round the course, choosing the sites for winter tees and the permanent positions for temporary/winter/frost greens.

The Winter Course

There are those within every club who think that the standard of presentation and condition of the winter golf course should be the same as that in summer. This is simply not a realistic proposition on the majority of British golf courses. The intention of laying out the winter course should be to provide as much golf as possible, with the least possible damage to the fine turf areas and to accommodate the maximum number of golfers who wish to play. If the time taken to play a round can be reduced, then when the absence of daylight is a problem more people may play. On the shortest day, with light available from 8 am to 4.30 pm, assuming a 4 hour round, 4.5 hours of start times are available

at 24 players per hour, ie there is time for 108 players to complete their round. For each 10 minutes per round of time reduction another 4-ball may be accommodated. The route round the course should be kept as short as possible. There should be no walking back from green to the next tee; winter tees should be placed on the way to the next hole. There is a wear and time advantage to be gained if Par 5s are shortened to Par 4s for winter.



This has the advantage of moving the drive landing area and having each player taking one divot less on the hole. Clubs should consider building proper hard core paths, if appropriate, between each green and the next tee. With increasing buggy use by the senior section and the need to provide better facilities for disabled golfers, such routes are in use both summer and winter and provide a safer traffic route. Paths laid all the way down the side of rectangular tees prevent muddy tracks being formed and provide parking for trolleys in both winter and summer. The muddy compacted areas of wear round winter tee positions are eyesores that may be visible well into the summer season. The winter tee positions on grass should be moved regularly or, better still, a hard standing winter tee area should be built to accommodate an artificial mat into the side of a hard core path.

Fairway Protection

It is usual to adopt "preferred lies" in winter. These were introduced over 40 years ago to make the playing of the game in winter more pleasant. However, they do nothing to help to protect the fairways during winter. In fact the reverse. By moving to the "best bit" of adjacent grass and then removing it as a divot in playing the shot, the good grass that would "spread" in spring has been removed. This was appreciated and commented on by the R&A in the *Rules of Golf* January 2000 version. P114 Winter Rules are sometimes adopted under the guise of protecting the course when in fact the practical effect is just the opposite. They permit moving the ball to the best turf, from which divots are taken to injure the course further. This comment does not appear in the 2004/2007 version. If the course is required to take heavy winter traffic some other solution should be implemented:

- ☞ tee up or play the ball as it lies
- ☞ provide a piece of Astroturf for each player
- ☞ move the ball from the fairway and place in the semi-rough.

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