



## DUTIES OF OFFICIAL STARTER

Ray Burniston looks at the roles of officials.

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It is important to define the starter's duties so that they know what is expected of them and can help the competitors playing in the competition. It should be borne in mind that most of those playing in the competition will be nervous and if the starter is firm and confident it will help the competitors at the start. Make sure your starter is fully briefed before he/she takes over and they are aware of any local rules etc.

1. Call the players to the tee at least ten minutes before they are due to start and if necessary introduce them to each other. Remember they will be nervous and you can help them relax by just talking to them.
2. Make sure they have an official scorecard and they are familiar with the type of competition they are playing in. Point out any special local rules that are in place for the competition.
3. Remind them to check that they have no more than the maximum of 14 clubs.
4. In major competitions you may be required to check that they are using an approved ball/clubs.
5. You should point out that they should be able to identify their own ball.
6. Start matches at the time allocated and try to keep to time but make sure that the first player to tee off does not go until you give the OK.
7. The job of the starter is to make sure that matches start off at their appointed time. You should never try to start matches early unless instructed by an official.
8. If there are any rule disputes then refer the matter to the appropriate official.
9. Some form of communication is essential in most cases so that the starter can be informed of any problems from the competition office. Also the starter can easily get in touch if there are any hold ups or problems. If you have no communication system then a Junior Member could be asked to act as a runner.
10. If the club does not have a starter's hut then it is worth considering installing one, or hiring a tent for major events.
11. A portable PA system is essential for major competitions but make sure your starter can deal with it.

12. Beware of taking alcoholic drinks out to the starter, especially on a hot day, because you do not want him to become slightly the worse for drink. Unfortunately this has been known to have happened at times.
13. If play has to be suspended for weather conditions, or some other reason, then you will need to take the time lost for stoppages and adjust accordingly, making sure the players are aware of this. Players already on the course should be advised to mark their ball, or if allowed, complete the hole being played. Play must not continue after that.
14. For a club a Numbers Board is a great help so that competitors have an indication when they are due on the tee.
15. Please ensure that the players exchange cards in front of you.
16. The starter should advise competitors that Slow Play is unacceptable and to ensure they keep up with the game in front. This will eliminate them from any complaints.
17. The starter should advise players to play off the correct tee.

It is important to have sensible timings for matches. It is pointless to have five or six minute intervals because all that will happen is at the end of the day you will be running late. Also you have to take into account the standard of the golfers and also the length of the opening hole. If it is a par 3, then you cannot start until the green is clear. A short par 4 with low handicap golfers will create the same situation.

As a general practice the following time schedule should be followed:

- ✎ Two ball matches allow between six and eight minutes providing the first hole is more than 300 yards.
- ✎ Three ball matches allow between eight and ten minutes.
- ✎ Four ball matches allow between ten and fifteen minutes.

If you have a par 3 for the second hole then you should take this into any calculations and if any of the opening holes have difficulties such as rough and blind shots, then ball spotters will help to keep play moving. If you have a blind hole then someone positioned in view of those on the tee can signal when it is clear ahead.

On the day, a well run golf tournament starts with all the players getting away on time under normal conditions. For this a good competent starter is essential. So make sure they are fully briefed on all their duties.

Often in Pro Am tournaments the Professional will tee off from the back tees and his team of amateurs may play from the forward tees. So you must be aware of this and see that this is carried out.

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