



## CAN WE PREVENT VANDALISM?

Ray Burniston offers advice on ways to prevent vandalism.

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What action can the secretary take to avoid or reduce vandalism on the course? Much will depend on the location of the course. If you are well away from the population and isolated, your problems should be relatively small. The only persons, apart from golfers you might see, are ramblers especially if you have public footpaths across the course. However if housing estates and population surround you, then you could suffer from mindless vandalism at regular intervals.

A golf course can cover as much 200 or more acres, so it is impossible to police. Fencing the whole area will be beyond the pocket of most clubs. Indeed, fences and hedges will not keep out the mindless vandal. Roads and pathways leading onto the course will give easy access to cars and motor cycles unless access is denied. You have to allow access for golfers and caddie carts, and your green keeping staff will need to be able to move around. Also if you lock gates remember you must have a policy for enabling emergency vehicles such as ambulances or fire engines to get quick access.

Encourage members when playing to be vigilant and report any unauthorised persons to you. If you have a school alongside the course then consider a policy of involving students in golf lessons with the professional. Those who are really interested become junior members. If some of the youngsters are members of the club, they will help to keep vandalism down. Also try to keep regular contact with adjoining landowners because this works both ways. They will inform you if they see any problems on your land and vice versa. Put up signs by all means but they often have little effect and are another item to be damaged.

Many clubs have persons authorised to search for golf balls on the course and they bring them into the professional's shop to be resold to members. Tell anyone authorised to do this that you expect him or her to keep an eye open and report anything unusual to you.

If you own surplus land apart from the actual course itself then you should have a policy of regular inspections. Prompt action should be taken if you have unwelcome guests.

If you have a driving range and practice area then in most cases it will be necessary to fence it in. This is not only for safety but also to try to prevent theft of golf balls.

If possible golf course equipment should be kept under lock and key when not in use. All equipment can be vandalised but also stolen. It is well worth fencing in the greenkeeping sheds with a high fence and locked gates.

If pins, flags and tee markers are constantly removed from the course then it will be necessary to employ someone to gather them in last thing at night and put them out first thing in the morning. This is a policy that some clubs have had to adopt over the years.

The problem will depend on the area your club is in. All you can do is to keep a firm grip on events making sensible recommendations to your committee when necessary.

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