



PARAMETERS OF BUGGY USE

Dave Weston gives advice about the use of golf buggies on the course.

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As one who still carries his clubs after playing the game for over forty years, I would hate to be compelled to use a buggy on the course, as has become the vogue in the United States. In members' clubs around the country, many hours of debate have already been taken up with discussions about the acceptance, or not, of buggies and the consequences to the club of so doing. Already the Disability Act has led to two court cases involving the right of access to a course by disabled players requiring the use of a buggy. Why is opinion so divided on the issue? For the older members who have difficulty in walking the full 18-hole circuit, the use of a buggy will enable them to enjoy their golf and the company of friends well into their retirement. For those recovering from operations or serious illness, the buggy is a welcome aid to their rehabilitation on the course. For the permanently disabled golfer, a buggy is essential.

What are the objections to their use? Only the courses constructed during the last thirty years are likely to have been designed to incorporate the possible use of a buggy. During the last decade there has been more appreciation of the Health & Safety considerations of allowing buggies onto courses, especially those with areas of sloping terrain. It is the traffic damage caused, particularly around the greens and along to the next tee that is so difficult to evaluate, and on some courses, especially links, the serious wear and compaction caused at bottlenecks between dunes. Apportioning the blame for the wear between the golfer who carries or pulls a trolley, as a mechanised one and that resulting from buggy use would appear to be impossible. There is also the problem of the decision of if, or when, to ban them during the winter period, on either (or both) of the above criteria, safety and damage to the course. Finally, the Club Management or Owner must consider the possibility of an accident to the user of, or to a third party, caused by a buggy.

In my view, it is to the advantage of the club to adopt a set of “**Rules for the Use of Buggies**” and ensure that those wishing to use them on the course have read them and signed to that effect. This procedure will clearly establish responsibilities on the course and establish non-discrimination within the Disability Act.

1. In winter, buggies may not be used when a trolley ban is in operation.
2. Whenever possible buggies must be kept to the rough and on the paths.
3. Buggies must not be taken onto teeing areas.
4. Buggies must not be taken inside the white markers surrounding the greens and should not be taken within 5 yards of the green or greenside bunkers.

5. Great care should be taken when negotiating slopes or banks. Buggies should never be driven across slopes if there is an alternative route.
6. Take extreme care on holes “4” and “8”, if in doubt use the transport bridge at the 12th. (for example)
7. In extremely wet summer conditions, buggies may be prohibited for brief periods.
8. It is a condition of use that the buggy user carries third party insurance.
9. Breaches of these guidelines may result in permission for the use of personal buggies being withdrawn.
10. Buggies may be parked on the practice area not in the car park.

The club should carry out a “Buggy Risk Assessment” to establish if there are any potential accident black spots on the course and document them, in addition to the written Disability Risk for the course.

Persons wishing to use buggies

1. Visitors may use their own buggy, if insured, (or hire one from the professional/club) by prior arrangement.
2. Personal buggies must be limited to one occupant and may not be hired or loaned.
3. Members wishing to use a buggy may apply to the Membership Committee, in writing, through the office, giving their reasons.
4. Buggies must not be left on club premises overnight. No storage facilities will be provided.
5. Buggies may/may not be used in competitive club/open golf.

User Declaration

I, the undersigned, have read the above regulations and agree to abide by them.

Name (Block Capitals)

Date

Signature

Time

For members with personal buggies, who have been granted permission to use them, their signed form should be retained permanently by the office. For the hire buggies, the professional or club must carry the “for hire” insurance cover. Prior to collecting the keys, the hirer should have to read the conditions of use and sign the declaration. This form should be retained by the professional. As a reminder to the driver of the hire buggy the conditions of use: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 should be displayed on a notice attached to the interior of the buggy.

In carrying out the Buggy Risk Assessment of the course, the club should have identified possible accident black spots and drawn up a Priority Action List to reduce their number and severity. Once these Health & Safety issues have been addressed, the club should then consider a path construction programme. Properly made and edged hardcore paths reduce the unsightly wear effects of buggies, trolleys and golfers using the same track, green to tee, and there is the additional benefit of the increased safety of using such a route. It is not particularly expensive to lay a neat edged path along the side(s) of each tee. Where a club uses artificial teeing surfaces during the winter, proper site provision for those mats can be built into the side of the path. The minimum track width required for a buggy track is five feet but six will comfortably accommodate two trolley-pullers walking side by side. Special attention and design is required if the track needs to bridge a watercourse. Permission from the National Rivers Authority is required to culvert any stream.

I was surprised, once the above parameters had been established, how little time it took to draw up the associated paperwork, and begin to implement the safety improvements and path construction on the course. Inevitably, there will be some clubs where the terrain is so severe that buggies cannot be used safely on all, or some areas of the course. The written “Buggy Risk Assessment” for that club detailing those conclusions may be displayed on the club web-site, and will be immediately available for dispatch should any visitor wish to enquire about the use of a personal buggy on the course. Much more detailed information and advice on the legal implications of use of buggies on the course and those of the Disability Act are available to members of the NGCAA.

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