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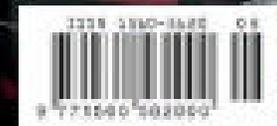
- That's Who KZG-Is!

Growing The Game Of Golf

Where It Really Lives

The Art of Staying Dry

- The DryJoys Way!

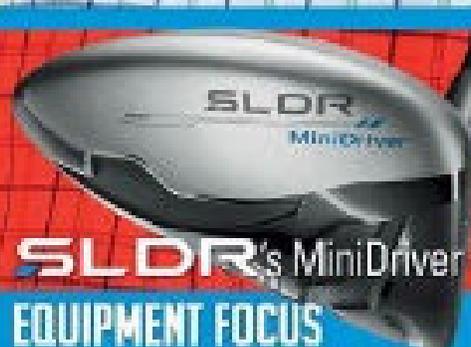


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SPECIAL FEATURE

GROWING THE GAME OF GOLF WHERE IT REALLY LIVES



“One blind man leads many blind men. [Ichi-mô shû-mô wo hiku. In Japanese]”
- Buddhist Proverb



As part of the Asia Pacific Golf Group's commitment to change the game of golf and make it more relevant to today's society, **James Prusa**, Director of Sky Golf 72 in South Korea weighs in with his thoughts on what should be done to grow the game of golf. He makes a very significant observation which calls for the direct involvement of golf course owners to help change and grow the game of golf. - by *James Graham Prusa*

Over the term of several difficult years, if not decades, we have heard many calls to 'grow the game' of golf. These siren calls have so often come from the top golf associations and organizations along with countless programs such as 'junior golf' development.

Surely everyone in the sport and business of golf wants to grow the game, but how will that fundamentally happen? Can impediments to increasing the numbers and participation of golfers be solved by a committee? Can success be initiated by an association, a corporation or by another new program from the top organizations in golf? Would it not seem logical and rational that the golf business as a whole needs to focus

on supporting the most likely place where activities to develop, promote and engage golfers and potential golfers actually takes place? Would that place be some distant corporate board room, a golf business conference, at a major golf event – or is it at all the world's golf courses where the game organically lives and breathes?

The resources, brain power, innovations and passion to grow golf have always been and remain located at the local golf course, but so too are the problems and impediments as well. The top-dogs in golf all need to get behind those on the real frontlines of golf and stop trying to continue to act as celebrity gurus with buzzwords promoting the grow-the-game, scheme of the month. The tail has been

wagging the dog for too long. Let's be clear. Without golf courses, and those professional management disciplines that teach, prepare and operate golf courses, there is no golf!

Business associations can do analysis until paralysis sets in, but leaving the state of golf courses out of the equation is just plain dumb. It is at the golf course where the ball hits the fairway. It is about impossible for people at the top of golf to clearly see what takes place at all the local golf course and, as such, many have been led astray. *Ichi-mô shû-mô wo hiku.*

The First Rule of Successful Golf Business: Know the rules and forget them immediately.

The real leaders of the game can be found

working every day at your local golf course providing product and service to untold legions of average golfers. Only locally is where the game really exists, succeeds or fails. Throughout the world it's a simple reality that most rounds of golf are not played with The Open Championship or PGA Tour standards of adherence to the Rules of Golf. This does not mean that most golfers are not mindful or not respectful of the rules – they just want to have what Dr. Alister Mackenzie (who designed some of the greatest golf courses in the world) called a game of "pleasurable excitement." In the common vernacular this means F-U-N, fun. We who manage golf courses call it the 'whole experience' or other catchy phrases that help us

sound MBA-ish. But plain fun is what it's supposed to be all about along with all the extra goodies like sportsmanship.

The Rules of Golf are critically important and you'll get no argument out me over this. Every golfer should become at least conversant in them, even if few rigidly employ them. Unfortunately, as some may readily assert, the Rules have grown to rival the size of the Napoleonic Code. On the other hand, wordsmith writers understand the need for specificity. If only lawyers and golf bureaucrats could grasp the meaning of the word 'brevity' concurrently with 'specificity' then writers would cheer them and the rules might be fewer.

Brevity and specificity are prized throughout all Asian cultures and were brought to

a pinnacle of perfection in a unique style of Japanese poetry called haiku. Rooted in the medieval Japan of the shoguns, haiku arose from the Zen Buddhist quest for specificity and brevity. Haiku is a beautiful art form that, like golf, has a very strict set of rules to boot. The objective is to express the greatest meaning in only three short sentences consisting of five, seven, and five syllables. Haiku has these strict rules and it is very challenging to write, but its foremost master haiku poet Matsuo Basho most admirably wrote to all of Japanese posterity:

“Know the rules (of writing haiku) and forget them immediately!”

What Basho was most likely telling us is that we must know and respect the rules first in

SPECIAL FEATURE Growing The Game

order to keep our reference point and preserve haiku (or the game of golf), but he also seems to say that we cannot stifle creative and innovative talents by always following the rules rigidly. After all the Rules of Golf have been dynamic and incorporated massive official changes over time to better serve the evolving game. Today the advice of Basho makes sense in golf and that is what is taking place all over Asia at the foundational piers of the game here. So what is taking place that is working?

Making the game more fun is taking place at Asia's golf courses.

PLAY FORE. In Northeast Asia the most common daily operations modification to the Rules of Golf involves ignoring the application of stroke and distance applications under such rules as:

Rule 26 Water Hazards (Including Lateral Water Hazards)

Rule 27-1. Stroke and Distance; Ball Out of Bounds; Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes

And further defined by Decisions such as BALL UNPLAYABLE 28/1

On Asia's crowded courses it would be insane if not impossible to have golfers 'imped-

ing' the pace of play (or losing face) by applying stroke and distance to go back to hit another ball. So, long ago the Japanese innovated what they call in Japan the "Play Fore" procedure, as in fore being forward. This is now practiced near universally in Northeast Asia. A player does indeed incur and take the penalty stroke, but rather than going back to forfeit distance, one usually goes forward (fore) to gain distance by dropping a ball at a predetermined drop area defined usually by a set of tee markers plopped in the fairway landing area. Perhaps it is still 'stroke and distance,' but with an entirely new definition for computing the distance (chuckle).

At SKY72 golf courses in Incheon, Korea, the practice of the Play Fore procedure is essential. With five busy, championship golf courses around the vicinity of the Incheon International Airport (ICN), rounds of play at SKY72 exceed any western concepts (or dream) of maximizing course utilization. The Ocean Course (Nicklaus Design) hosts 90,000 rounds annually; the Hanul Course does about 85,000+ rounds and the two fully illuminated courses,



Here at SKY72 Classic Course, the Play Fore tee markers stretch across a fairway for use by players who may hit their errant tee shot into the lake. This practice of Play Fore is common throughout Japan and Korea



“The top-dogs in golf all need to get behind those on the real frontlines of golf and stop trying to continue to act as celebrity gurus with buzz-words promoting the grow-the-game, scheme of the month. The tail has been wagging the dog for too long. Let's be clear. Without golf courses, and those professional management disciplines that teach, prepare and operate golf courses, there is no golf!”

Lake and Classic, achieve close to 120,000 rounds each annually. Groups of 4 with a mandatory caddie go off all the tees on 7 minute intervals. There is no possible way to do anything about stroke and distance other than to keep moving forward.

THE HOLE. The Rules of Golf clearly define the hole under Definitions:

Hole The "hole" must be 4 1/4 inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least 4 inches (101.6 mm) deep. If a lining is used, it must be sunk at least 1 inch (25.4 mm) below the *putting green* surface, unless the nature of the soil makes it impracticable to do so; its outer diameter must not exceed 4 1/4 inches (108 mm).



Now that everyone clearly knows the rules about the hole definition, the innovative leader of SKY72 followed Basha's advice and promptly forgot it in the successful quest to satisfy golf customers. The CEO, Kim Young Je, the passion behind SKY72's creation and operations, decided to try something different. He asked his staff to brainstorm and test out the concept of using 200 mm (7.9 inch) holes during special events, peak times, on Par 3s and whenever a green exhibited more than normal amounts of stress. In just a few days the new cups were manufactured by a Korean machinist, chrome plated and promptly installed in some greens. This was a huge success and customer satisfaction was high. These 'big cups' are now regularly employed and have also been well received. Obviously, for competitive events and championship play the hole defined in the rules is strictly adhered to, but for FUN, average golf the big cups come out – not on all holes.

ENVIRONMENTALLY-SENSITIVE

AREA (ESA). In fairly recent years the Rules of Golf have been modified to allow for special, local rule treatment of environmentally-sensitive areas under the Appendix:

Appendix I – Local Rules; Conditions of the Competition

Part B. Specimen Local Rules

- 2. Areas of the Course Requiring Preservation; Environmentally- Sensitive Areas
 - b. Environmentally-Sensitive Areas

This was a no-brainer at SKY72, as management readily went to local authority and had all its OB areas 'optionally' declared as environmentally sensitive areas at the vary-

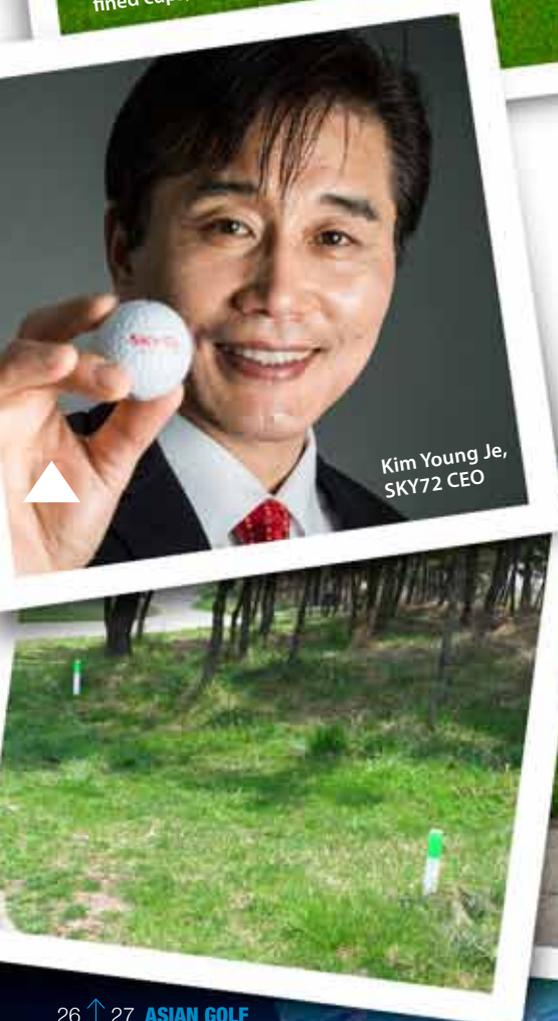
ing discretion of SKY72 management. SKY72 effectively eliminated OBs for customer play. Local rule designated ESAs are defined by green-stripped stakes and require the golfers to use specifically marked drop areas *without penalty*.

Once again the Rules of Golf were 'stretched' to a new intention during daily play (shudder us purests), but the rules are then always properly implemented for competitions and qualifying rounds for both sanctioned amateur and amateur events.

The real crisis of golf is not a lack of grow-the-game initiatives towards creating more golfers. The real crisis is a general failure to recognize that growth of golf is only going to happen at the local golf courses – golf courses and the people who manage them are the most important rank in the golf industry. Growth of the game of golf will result when golf addresses the causal crisis issues that golf courses suffer at the game's heart and soul.

If the golf community elects to not only build golf courses, outfit them with equipment, and sell courses supplies, but also intensely focuses on educating and training local human resources to assure business-like management, then the game will again expand. It has never been more critical to engage and support local golf courses with training. At highly successful golf operations, albeit private or public, such as the aforementioned SKY72, staff training is a primary management strategy. Training builds morale, improves abilities and nurtures passion.

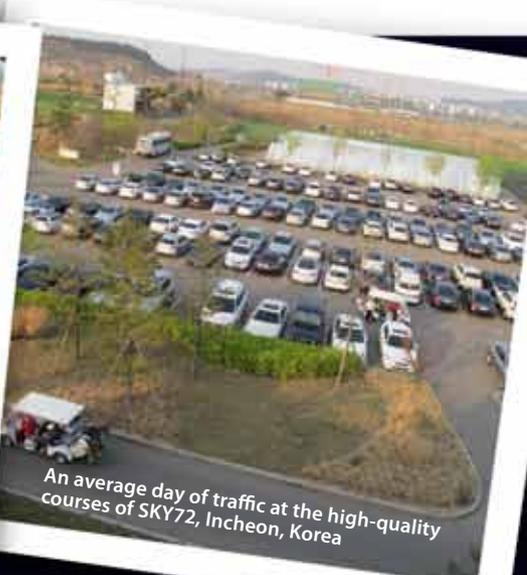
It is only at the local golf course where the game exists organically and will grow – and golfers (or potential golfers) always vote with their feet. What local golf course operation would not want to have its car park filled to capacity? Clearly customer satisfaction with high quality golf course conditions and FUN golf will keep the car parks filled at SKY72.



SKY72's 200 mm hole cups dwarf the rules defined cups, but they are a big hit with golfers



Local rule designated ESAs are defined by green-stripped stakes and require the golfers to use specifically marked drop areas *without penalty*.



An average day of traffic at the high-quality courses of SKY72, Incheon, Korea