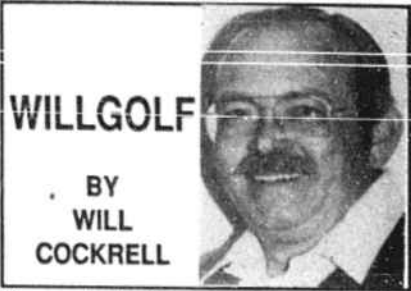


# Don't Ground Your Golf Club

Golf Digest Magazine recently published one of those one page "Tips" by Jack Nicklaus on how to make a smooth putting stroke. These quick tips are common to most of the golf periodicals. They are normally innocuous tidbits of instructional lore by little known teaching professionals. Those which come from Nicklaus are exceptions, however. To students of the game, they often portend more than is stated in the text.

True to the Nicklaus image, there is a depth of thought and more than a trace of reason to everything he does and all that he represents. In this particular tip he reveals that he "hovers" the blade of his putter just barely above the surface of the putting green before making his stroke. He reasons that a putter suspended in this fashion encourages a smooth back stroke and enables keeping the blade low to the ground without the fear of catching the blade on the surface of the green.



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COCKRELL

## Hover All The Clubs

If you know much about Nicklaus and his style of play you also know that he does not ground any of his clubs when he addresses the ball. The same logic applies to all golf shots. If you are not obliged to break contact with the ground on the back stroke, you are less likely to jerk or force the first movements of the backswing. You therefore increase the chances of a smooth take away. While this seems to make good sense, it is not the only reason that Nicklaus first adopted the practice of not grounding his clubs.

During his amateur playing days, for some obscure reason, Nicklaus deduced that, by definition in the rules of golf, a player has not met the full requirements of "addressing the ball" until he has grounded the club.

To address the ball under the rules a player must have taken his stance and grounded his club. (In a hazard the player has addressed the ball when he has simply taken his stance.)

Accordingly, Nicklaus reasoned that it is possible to avoid a number of penalties by not grounding his club. Rule 18. stipulates that if a ball moves after the player has "addressed" the ball, that the player shall be deemed to have moved the ball and incurs a penalty stroke. This is true even if the player's club has not touched the ball. Apparently Nicklaus fell victim to that rule and make a conscious decision not to "address" the ball by not grounding his club. He, therefore, prevents incurring such penalties.

## Gary Player Knows

Nicklaus is, of course, not unique in his expert knowledge of the rules. I witnessed Gary Player demonstrate a similar knowledge of Rule 18. at the Greensboro Open back when it was played at Sedgefield Country Club. The fifth hole at Sedgefield is a long par 4 which requires a middle to long iron approach shot. Accordingly, the large green is tilted toward the fairway in order to more readily accept such a shot.

On the day in question the greens were slick and the wind was howling. Player's ball landed on the sloped rear of the green some 40 feet from the pin which was on the front of the green. He carefully checked his line to the hole and just before he took his stance to putt Gary motioned to one of his fellow competitors to come and observe that he would not "ground" his putter when he took his stance.

It was a good thing too, for just as he began to take his back stroke a strong gust of wind blew him off balance and he backed away from the putt. The same gust of wind also broke the balls perch on the green and amazingly it rolled down the slick green and stopped two feet to the left of the pin.

In my blissful ignorance of the rules, I was confident that he would have to replace the ball on the back of the green and putt from there. Not so. While the spectators and his fellow competitors were still laughing and joking about what had happen, Gary smiled and calmly walked up and tapped the ball in for a birdie. One of his fellow pros immediately began to protest that he could not do that. Player and the other pro assured him that under the rules Player had scored a three.

What Player knew was that wind is not an outside agency and that he could not be penalized since he had not "addressed the ball." Furthermore he was smart enough to have someone observe and confirm that he did not ground his club while preparing to putt.

## Knowledge Is Power, Strokes

This case was an unusual twist of fate to be sure, but it certainly underlines my personal contention that a good knowledge of the rules of golf will help you more often than it will penalize you. When you are aware of all the options under the rules, you will be a smarter golfer, you will play with more confidence and you will be a welcome asset to those with whom you play.

# Brierwood Ninettes Hold Low Net Event

Julie McCall fired the low net to win last Friday's Brierwood Ninettes golf tournament.

Elsie Rickbeil and Emily Laughlin placed second and third respectively in the group's final Friday golf tournament of the season.

Dodie Niland finished with the low number of putts, 17. Runner-up was Nearle Einstein with 18.

Two golfers carded pars during the round. Elsie Rickbeil parred the third hole and Nearle Einstein had pars at the third, fifth and sixth holes.

## Ruth's Renegades

Helen Brady fired a net 35 for a one-stroke victory in last Thursday's tournament sponsored by Ruth's Renegades golf group from Carolina Shores.

Playing at Brierwood Golf Club, competitors counted scores on the nine holes starting with the letters "T," "E" and "N" and used half handicaps.

Runner-up was Elaine Haddock at net 36. Doerthe Needham placed third at net 37.

## GOLFING ACTION

There were five chip-ins during the round. They came from Ruth Brown at the fourth hole, Doerthe Needham at the 11th, Dot Frey at the 13th, Jane Abarno at the 14th and Carolyn McCroskey at the 17th.

The Renegades will not hold their regular tournament this week because of Thanksgiving.

## Brick Landing

Rose Gorney fired a net 64 to win the first flight in the Brick Landing Ladies Golf Association tournament last Thursday.

Mrs. Gorney also tied for low putt honors in the top flight with Ruth Gardner.

Marie Barry had the low net in the second flight. The low putt winner in that division was Ruth Daniels.

In the nine hole group, Edna Hollowell finished with the low net.

The Brick Landing ladies will not play on Thanksgiving and will resume play Nov. 30.

# Area Golfers Play PGA West

A foursome from Ocean Isle Beach Golf Course competed against 35 other teams over the weekend in the John Deere Team Championship Golf Tournament at Palm Springs, Calif.

The competition provided an opportunity for golf courses to field teams of five players in a tournament sanctioned by the Professional Golfers Association (PGA). The second annual tournament was played Saturday and Sunday at the famed PGA West Course.

Members of the local team were Don Tew, golf course superintendent; Jim Campbell, golf profes-

sional; DeCarol Williamson, club manager; and Charles Todd, club president. They competed with John Deere representative Turner Revels of Fuquay-Varina.

The format for the national tournament was a "modified scramble" with the PGA pro playing his or her own ball and the four amateurs playing the best ball. Team scores were based on the better of either the pro's or scramble team's net score hole-by-hole.

Participating teams in the national contest were decided during regional competitions involving the PGA's 41 sections.

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