

## Pace of Play Best Practices Summary Document OIC Version

### Introduction

The USGA recently made a concerted effort to examine and enact best practices that would positively impact the pace of play at USGA championships and championship qualifying. Three components that impact pace of play were identified; committee decisions, player behavior and variables outside the control of the committee and players. The following document serves as a summary of best practices to be used by all officials in charge of sectional qualifying moving forward.

### Advanced Analysis

There are a number of areas where OICs can proactively employ advanced analysis to positively impact the pace of play at USGA qualifiers. Three such areas include the development of a pace of play policy, consideration of various logistical and operational matters, identifying potential “bottle-necks” and developing plans to mitigate their impact.

### 1. Develop a Pace of Play Policy

A “pace of play” policy must be in place at all USGA qualifying rounds regardless of the size of the qualifying field. The USGA uses two types of pace of play policies at its championships. At the three Open championships, the “out of position/group monitoring and timing” policy is used. In amateur championships a “checkpoint” policy is used. See [Appendix V](#) in the USGA Qualifying Manual for samples of both these policies.

While it is a requirement that a pace of play policy be in place, the OIC is free to utilize one of the two policies mentioned above, or another of his/her choosing.

The “pace of play” policy must lay out the required time for players to complete the round, a hole or holes and, if the “out of position/group monitoring” policy is used, a stroke. The following may be used as a guide (give or take a minute based on the ease/difficulty of the hole) in determining the appropriate time allotted for a hole and thus a round:

|                 | Par 3      | Par 4      | Par 5      |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Groups of Three | 13 minutes | 15 minutes | 17 minutes |
| Groups of Two   | 11 minutes | 13 minutes | 15 minutes |

The following are some key elements of the “checkpoint” policy:

- The number of checkpoints is at the discretion of the OIC. The USGA uses a system consisting of four checkpoints – following holes 4, 9, 13 and 18.

- The first group is in breach of the policy if the flagstick is replaced at a checkpoint hole after the maximum allowable time based on the pace of play chart created by the OIC.
- A subsequent group is in breach if the flagstick is replaced at a checkpoint hole after the maximum allowable time AND more than 14 minutes after the preceding group replaced the flagstick.
- When a group is in breach of the policy, each player in the group is liable to penalty however the application of any penalty occurs only in the scoring area.
- A group that is liable to penalty may appeal the penalty in the scoring area.
- After a group reaches a checkpoint out of position and incurs a warning, a player in that group who plays without delay and clearly demonstrates an attempt to reach the next checkpoint in the expected time and to catch up with the group ahead, may avoid penalty.
- After a group reaches a checkpoint out of position and incurs a warning, a player who makes no effort to reach the next checkpoint in the expected time or to catch up with the group ahead and misses the subsequent checkpoint, will incur the applicable penalty which will be imposed in the scoring area following the round.
- A group in position at the previous checkpoint that has a long ruling or extensive search for a ball on the next checkpoint hole will be exempted from penalty if the group is unable to complete that checkpoint hole in the expected time.

The following are some of the key elements of the “out of position/group monitoring” policy:

- Generally, a group must be over its time based on the pace of play chart and “out of position” relative to the group in front of it before monitoring and timing of a group is warranted.

The following are general guidelines that can be used for defining “out of position”:

- The first group(s) to start will be considered out of position if, at any time during the round, the group is behind the prescribed schedule as detailed on a Pace of Play Time Chart the OIC should provide in advance.
- Any following group will be considered out of position if it completes play of a hole (replaces the flagstick) later than the maximum allowable time given **and**:
  - Reaches a par-3 hole that is clear of all play and all players in the preceding group have played their strokes from the teeing ground of the next hole.



- Reaches a par-4 or par-5 hole which is **not** clear of all play but which becomes clear of all play **before** all players in the group have played their strokes from the teeing ground.
- Reaches a par-4 or par-5 hole which is clear of all play.
- If a group is to be monitored, a player generally must play a stroke within 40 seconds from the time he or she can make a stroke without interference or distraction.

The USGA uses the following penalty structure for pace of play violations in stroke play:

- One bad timing exceeding the allotted time – Warning
- A second bad timing – 1 stroke penalty
- A third bad timing – Additional 2 stroke penalty
- A fourth bad timing – Disqualification

**NOTE:** If the group in question regains its proper position, any previous timing of more than the allotted time will be carried over for the remainder of that round in the event that the group requires additional monitoring.

In dealing with pace of play issues, communication among Rules officials is critical. Speaking to and/or monitoring and timing groups that are not playing at an acceptable pace should be limited to specific Committee members. Advising a group that is lagging behind and needs to close the gap on consecutive holes, especially when it is done by different officials each time, is unprofessional and must be avoided.

## 2. Logistical/Operational Considerations

- Starting time intervals – Dependent on field size, starting time intervals should be at least 10 minutes in stroke play. If field size is 72 players or fewer (one wave) or 144 players or fewer (two waves), 11 minute intervals are preferred and recommended. This should be possible for most qualifiers, but available daylight must be considered.
- Separation between morning and afternoon waves - A minimum of a 3 hour gap between the final morning starting time and the first afternoon starting time should be used. However, a 3.5 hour gap is preferred. Greater separation between the morning and afternoon waves allows for better spacing between the last group of the morning wave and the first group of the afternoon wave and a more consistent enforcement of pace of play. In all cases, available daylight must be considered in determining the appropriate gap.
- Volunteer training – Insuring an adequate training program for volunteers serving as marshals and forecaddies has been identified as an important aspect in the conduct of any qualifier. Marshals or forecaddies that are performing their roles in an efficient and effective manner can be an asset to the overall pace of play for the championship.
- Stationing additional marshals and forecaddies at potential “bottle-neck” holes should be

a strategy that is employed by all OICs.

- Location of on course player services – Consideration must be given in locating various player service related items on the golf course. Generally, such items, e.g., water coolers, snacks, etc., should be located in positions such that players do not have to back track to utilize them. Additionally, locating them at the tee on par-3 holes should be avoided.
- Player walking paths – Walking routes for players between tees and fairways/greens, fairways and greens and the previous putting green to the next tee impacts pace of play. OICs should identify where player walk paths can be created to insure as direct a walking route as possible.

### **3. Identifying Potential Pace of Play “Bottle-Necks”**

Identifying potential “bottle-neck” holes is paramount in developing an appropriate maximum allowable time. “Bottle-neck” holes are likely to be par-3, drivable par-4 and two-shot par-5 holes, especially if they fall within the first two or three holes of the stipulated round. Proactively identifying these holes allows the OIC to develop strategies to mitigate the anticipated waits that are likely to occur. Additional and well-trained marshals/forecaddies and thoughtful set-up decisions can be important strategies to manage “bottle-neck” holes. Another key tool is the “call-up” policy. This policy can be used on par-3 and drivable par-4 holes to help reduce waiting time at the tees of these holes. This policy can be found in the USGA Qualifying Manual.

#### **Golf Course Set-up**

- Drivable par-4 and two shot par-5 holes should be avoided. Where a “bottle-neck” hole has been identified, increasing the difficulty of the previous hole(s) should be considered as a means of mitigating potential wait times at the “bottle-neck” hole thus slowing down the arrival of groups.
- OICs should consult with their respective championship SIC if they have questions regarding an appropriate setup for qualifying. The OICs should strive to find balance in their qualifier setup and in most cases that means their setup will be slightly different than how the championship proper is setup.

#### **Educational Opportunities**

A focused, proactive educational effort with all players (and caddies) prior to commencing play will potentially yield dividends during the qualifier. All Committee members should be familiar with the pace of play policy and fully understand their role within it.

- OICs will be required to distribute the championship’s pace of play policy to all players prior to the qualifier.
- Pace of Play information and reminders should be included with player registration if possible. In addition, starters should reinforce key aspects of the policy and helpful player hints.

- OICs should distribute, in advance of the qualifier, various pace of play related documents to all Rules officials attending the qualifier. These documents will include the pace of play policy, all information distributed to the players (for reference) and a summary document regarding the enforcement of the pace of play. A dedicated meeting with all rovers and officials should be scheduled in advance of the qualifier to review Pace of Play enforcement.

### **Data Collection**

The timely collection of accurate pace of play data from each qualifier is important. All OIC's should submit pace of play information (e.g. finish times) for the archiving of their respective qualifier's pace of play data. In 2015, it is the USGA's intention to provide each OIC with a pace of play archiving document to fill out for their respective qualifier.