

How Do Handicaps Work In Golf Match Play?

Example: In a single golf match between players of 20 and 12, the 12-handicappers will give the 20-handicappers eight strokes.

River Oaks Senior Men's Match Play Rules:

- **Tees:** All matches will be played using GOLD tees. Handicaps should be calculated accordingly.
- Golf Canada rules apply.
- **Application of Handicap Strokes:** The player with the higher handicap shall have his handicap reduced by the handicap of his opponent and any resulting strokes applied according to the hole ratings on the score card. New score cards for the North Course and old score cards for the South Course. (New cards haven't been made up for the South Course)

Course of play: Matches may be played on the North or South Course.

Dates of play (Deadlines): Matches must be completed on or before the dates posted. If contestants are unable to agree on a date, the match date will be the final date posted for that round. If a contestant fails to show or indicates he is unable to meet the match deadline, he will forfeit the match to his opponent. Contact the convener prior to posted deadlines if matches cannot be completed on time.

Disputes: Any conflicts or disputes must be referred to the Match Play Convener – Dave Ryan, Email: harolddavidryan@gmail.com

No Entry Fee: **Prizes For:** Division A and B Champs and overall match play champ. Prizes will be presented at our closing dinner.

How Match Play Rules Differ from Stroke Play Rules

Golfers watching or, especially, playing match play need to be aware of the differences in the rules between match play and stroke play. Some of the differences are major, some are minor and some involve a different type of penalty when rules are broken.

The Way It's Played

In this sense, match play is a whole different game than stroke play. In stroke play, golfers accumulate strokes over the course of 18 holes. The golfer with the fewest strokes at the completion of the round wins.

In match play, each hole is a separate competition. The player with the fewest strokes on an individual hole wins that hole; the player winning the most holes wins the match.

The stroke total for 18 holes simply doesn't matter in match play.

Stroke play is more a player vs. the course approach; match play is directly player vs. player, or side vs. side. There is one opponent you must beat, and that's the opponent you're facing in the match you're playing right now.

Conceded Putts

In friendly rounds of golf, golfers often ask for and give "gimmies," very short putts that one simply picks up rather than holing out. Gimmies, needless to say, are illegal under the Rules of Golf, but many recreational golfers use them anyway.

In match play, however, conceded putts are perfectly legal. *Note: We'll also be playing rangs at the same time so all holes should be puttied out.*

Conceded putts should only be offered, they should never be requested. That's why in some match play matches you'll notice a golfer lingering over a very short putt - the golfer is hoping his opponent will tell him to just pick it up.

Fellow-Competitor vs. Opponent

This is a semantic difference. In stroke play, the golfers you are playing against are your "fellow-competitors." In match play, the golfer you are playing against is your "opponent."

Hit That One Again

There are several scenarios in match play where a transgression might result in your opponent cancelling your shot and requiring you to replay it; whereas in stroke play, the same transgression would result in a 2-stroke penalty or no penalty at all.

A few examples:

- **Playing out of turn:** In stroke play, order of play is a matter of etiquette. If you hit out of turn, it's a breach of etiquette, but there is no penalty. In match play, if you hit out of turn your opponent can require you to replay the shot in the proper order. And if your first shot was great one, you can bet that you'll be replaying.
- **Hitting from outside the teeing ground:** In stroke play, teeing off from outside the teeing ground (the teeing ground is between the tee markers and up to two club lengths behind the tee markers) results in a 2-stroke penalty. In match play, there is no stroke penalty, but your opponent can cancel your shot and require you to replay it.
- **Hitting an opponent.** In match play, you have the option to replay the shot.
- **Hitting a ball at rest on the green:** In stroke play, if your putt strikes another ball on the green, you get a 2-stroke penalty. In match play, there is no penalty.

The Big Penalty

In the rule book, just about every section concludes with a warning: "Penalty for Breach of Rule." If a golfer fails to follow the proper procedures set forth in the rules, he will incur a penalty in addition to any penalties set forth in that rule.

That penalty in stroke play is usually 2 strokes, and in match play is usually loss of hole.

Example: Let's say a player violates one of the tenets of Rule 19. There will likely be a penalty spelled out for that violation. But the golfer compounds his error by failing to follow the proper procedure for continuing play (maybe he doesn't assess himself the proper penalty; maybe he drops incorrectly; etc.) spelled out in that rule. The big penalty kicks in: 2 strokes in stroke play, loss of hole in match play.

Better Late than Never

In stroke play, disqualification is the result if you miss your tee time. In match play, you can show up late and still play ... as long as you make your match by at least the second tee. You'll have forfeited the first hole, but you can pick up the match on No. 2. If you fail to make it by the No. 2 tee, you're disqualified.