



## **COVID19 - Return to Sport Plan for Golf in Western Australia**

**As at June 27, 2020**

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Golf Western Australia (GolfWA) is the governing body for amateur golf in Western Australia and provides the following 'COVID19 - Return to Sport - Plan for Golf in Western Australia' to our affiliated clubs and public facilities for consideration.

Golf is a sport that lends itself naturally to social distancing, with players rarely within 1.5 metres of each other, and low density over a larger playing surface than most other sports. The sport is uniquely positioned to be played during times of social distancing and is set up well to cater for all government requirements through the COVID-19 period and beyond.

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**SECTION 1:**

**AIS FRAMEWORK**

The below outlines the AIS Framework for Rebooting sport in a COVID-19 environment, as well as each level’s application specific to golf in Western Australia.

	<b>Level A</b>	<b>Level B</b>	<b>Level C</b>
AIS framework recommendation	Solo or pairs only (if permitted by Local Government) Maintain at least 1.5m between players.	Full training. Maintain at least 1.5m between players.	Full training and competition. Maintain at least 1.5m between players
Application in Western Australia	Two people per group with social distancing as per WA Health Directions between groups. No club competitions. No amateur/professional events e.g Paxton Average/Ivie Temperley/Smarter than Smoking Junior Tour	Groups of four allowed. Club competition allowed. No amateur/professional events e.g Paxton Average/Ivie Temperley /Smarter than Smoking Junior Tour	Groups of four allowed. Club competition allowed. Amateur/professional events can be run whilst adhering to social distancing principles and provided clubs/facilities are allowing non-members

**How can golf can ensure that the 2sqm rule on the golf course is adhered to and maintain social distancing?**

Golf is played as follows:

- Social round of golf - an individual participant can play a round by themselves or in a group with up to three other players.
- Club competition round of golf - requires at least two players to be in a group with a maximum of four players per group. Note that competition golf is no different to social



golf, only the submission of a scorecard (with electronically being the preferred method) for competition and handicapping purposes defines the format.

- Given the nature of how golf is played, time intervals between groups will ensure social distancing. The area of a golf hole/course also enables participants to meet the 2 sqm minimum per person rule
- GolfWA recommends that in Phase 4 formats such as Ambrose or some forms of Foursome where groups are larger than 4, can now be played whilst still meeting any social distancing requirements
- Clubs are able to remove any local rules relating to the preparation of the hole and the handling of the flagstick and bunker rakes. GolfWA stresses that this is a Club's/facilities choice and that Golf Australia/Golf Western Australia still authorises clubs to make use of any of the COVID-19 Temporary Local Rules should they choose to.
- Two people may share a cart. In order to enhance safety, clubs may mandate that the same person must drive the cart for the duration of their round.
- The easing of restrictions at Phase 4 (effective Saturday June 27) will not change the way golf is played in Western Australia. Eg. there are no additional formats of the game that would violate social distancing or mass gathering principles that would/could be introduced at this time.

## SECTION 2:

### **WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RESTRICTIONS**

In relation to the playing of golf and operation of clubhouse facilities, Western Australia is bound by additional restrictions as outlined in the following directive issued by the Commissioner of Police and State Emergency Coordinator

- ***Closure and Restriction (Limit the Spread) Directions No 5 (effective June 27, 2020)***
- ***Covid 19 Safety Plan and Certificate – Sport and Recreation (optional as golf did not shut down under the Emergency Management Act but is strongly recommended)***
- ***Covid 19 Safety Plan and Certificate – Food Businesses. Compulsory***

Such Restrictions and Plans will be updated when necessary and GolfWA will advise affiliated clubs and golf facilities of such updates.



### **SECTION 3**

#### **GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

GolfWA has considered the following areas in our return to sport plan:

- A communication plan to inform clubs and facilities, and individual members of golf clubs and social golfers
- General hygiene principles required, including cleaning of facilities
- How golf clubs/facilities will ensure gatherings that adhere to the 2sqm per person rule both outdoors and indoors
- Recommendations to clubs/facilities on management of people who present themselves as unwell, or are experiencing cold, flu or fever type symptoms
- Access and egress protocols
- Requirements of non-participating attendees such as parents
- Use or non-use of club facilities such as toilets, change rooms, clubhouses and catering facilities, which are all now permitted
- Readiness to reverse plans should restrictions increase
- Readiness to advance to next level if restrictions ease
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#### **A communication plan to inform clubs and facilities and individual members of golf clubs and social golfers**

GolfWA has been communicating regular COVID-19 updates to member clubs and public facilities via e-mail with the same information loaded onto our website for individual members and social golfers. In relation to the introduction of Phase 4 Easing of Restrictions, a communication will be sent to all clubs and facilities on Monday June 29, 2020 once confirmation is received by Government to advise clubs and facilities of golf's status and provide clear guidelines and advice for the next phase of the return of our sport.

These updates have been ongoing since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis and are released as and when new COVID-19 information becomes available to provide further guidance to clubs.

A dedicated COVID-19 Resource Centre page has been created on the GolfWA website which provides guidance to clubs on managing play on the COVID-19 environment.

Our member clubs communicate information directly to their individual members.

GolfWA will communicate information directly to players participating in events or activities run directly by GolfWA when restrictions are eased that allow such competitions or event.

#### **General hygiene principles required, including cleaning of facilities**

GolfWA has communicated to clubs that their staff and volunteers should exhibit a heightened awareness of personal hygiene as has been encouraged by state and federal health departments and they should display a heightened regard for the sanitation of surfaces, of which their cleaning chemical provider will be able to provide guidance on.



Golf Australia and GolfWA have already provided Club & Facilities with specific easy to implement changes to regular operations to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. These include:

- Placing social distancing signage around the clubhouse along with hand sanitisers
- Sanitise motorised carts, push buggies and sand bucket handles, air compressor handles, before and after use
- Encourage golfers to wear their putting glove when removing the flag stick, when raking bunkers, and the use of drink fountains. Refer temporary modification of the rules section which gives clubs the choice to adopt policies around flagsticks and bunker rakes.
- If possible, clubs are encouraged to use the MiScore app to avoid the handling of scorecards (refer to Sections 4 and 5)
- Remove cash transactions and encourage 'Pay-Wave' transactions where no contact is required
- Remove small pins from practice putting greens
- No dollar bets
- No hand shaking
- Rental equipment to only be allocated once before being returned for thorough cleaning.

#### **Management of people who present who are unwell, experiencing any cold, flu or fever type symptoms**

As per health guidelines GolfWA has been recommending to clubs and facilities to advise their members and guests if they are experiencing any cold, flu or fever type symptoms they must not visit the golf facility. Additionally, we will recommend that these persons should seek to get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible.

#### **Access and egress protocols**

With the only restriction being the 2sqm rule per person, Clubs and Facilities no longer have to adhere to protocols around people arriving at the club and the tee a certain amount prior to their tee time; not having to leave immediately following the conclusion of their round etc.

#### **Requirements of non-sporting attendees such as parents and spectators**

GolfWA's recommendation to all clubs and facilities will be as per AIS Principles and WA State Government social distancing protocols.

#### **Use of other club facilities**

##### **Clubhouses**

Facility management must ensure procedures and policies are in place to ensure the facility adheres to social distancing and density requirements (the 2 sqm rule) set by the State Government.

GolfWA has provided advice to all clubs/facilities on the impact to clubhouse and food and beverage operations since mid-March. Based on updated advice from government, our communication will state that



the only restriction under Phase 4 is 2sqm per person. Alcohol can now be consumed without a meal and patrons do not have to be seated.

#### **Change rooms / Toilets**

- Communal Facilities (including change/locker rooms, showers and toilets) can open.
- Clubs should still consider whether items such as shoe cleaners, sun creams, hair brushes and combs, hair gel and hair dryers be removed
- Where possible, leaving doors ajar removing the need to push doors open or turn door knobs

#### **Readiness to reverse plans should restrictions increase**

- Should restrictions increase, GolfWA would recommend a combination of the following dependent on the strength of restrictions:
  - Social play only
  - Smaller group sizes (two or three people, instead of four)
  - Full closure of clubhouse facilities, with the course staying operational
  - Complete removal of all on-course items such as flagsticks and bunker rakes
  - Full closure of the facility

#### **Readiness to advance to next level if restrictions ease**

Clubs and Facility Boards and management will be recommended to begin planning for Stage 5 restrictions to be implemented immediately based on the Western Australian Government's announcement of this implementation date around July 18, 2020 (date TBC), and GolfWA will provide a list of further 'return to play' recommendations based on the most up to date information received from government closer to that date.



## **SECTION 4**

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES**

GolfWA has been encouraging clubs to consider every available measure to ensure social distancing is achieved at all times. The ability for clubs and facilities to implement these measures will depend on the resources available to them.

The following measures have been recommended by GolfWA to assist clubs and facilities to avoid congregation in key areas, and will be reiterated prior to recommencement of play:

#### **Registration**

- **Attendance Registers no longer need to be undertaken** although we would encourage clubs to at least maintain booking sheets for golf in case contact tracing has to occur.
- Clubs should consider making any registration payments non-contact (where applicable for time sheet bookings and/or for competition entry). For example, by charging to the golfer's club account, or charging to a securely pre-stored credit card at the time of registration (where registration is via the internet, text message, email, or phone call).
- As a result, staff/volunteers may not even need to be at the facility to manage the handicapping of pre-nominated social scores or of casual competitions or to perform some other golf shop functions.
- Note: Some of these options are standard operating procedure for many clubs. They may hold unusual value in the current environment for clubs that would not ordinarily use them.

#### **Scorecard submission points**

- Offer/require score submission via electronic communication.
  - For example, via MiScore app, email, phone call or MMS (some clubs are encouraging players to take a photo of their scorecard and email or MMS it to the club).
  - As a result, staff/volunteers may not need to be at the facility to manage the handicapping of pre-nominated social scores, or of casual competitions (see point 9 above).

#### **Starting Times**

- No restrictions

#### **Regular club competitions**

Clubs/facilities can conduct internal club competitions as per normal as these events are essentially a social experience. Board events, monthly medals and Open events (e.g Paxton Average and Ivie Temperley) can now be conducted under Phase 4. Presentations can occur but recommended that safe hygiene practices are implemented e.g avoid over handling of trophies.



## SECTION 5

### TEMPORARY MODIFICATIONS TO THE RULES OF GOLF

On March 19, 2020, the R&A (who are the ruling authority of golf throughout the world except in north America) announced a series of temporary measures to combat the hygiene implications associated with some of the requirements of the Rules of Golf. These temporary measures allow the Rules of Golf, and Model Local Rules, to be modified as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Various examples are described below.

Under Phase 4 Clubs are now able to remove any local rules relating to the preparation of the hole and the handling of the flagstick and bunker rakes. GolfWA stresses that this is a Club's/facilities choice and that Golf Australia/Golf Western Australia still authorises clubs to make use of any of the COVID-19 Temporary Local Rules should they choose to.

#### **Modifications**

If a club chooses to continue to invoke some or all of these Temporary Local Rules, they should be mindful of the following:

- You will need to announce which options are in effect for play at your facility – these options do not automatically come into effect at your facility as a result of the R&A announcement.
- Scores returned from competitions with any of the new Local Rules in effect must be processed through GOLF Link unless your club has been instructed otherwise by Golf Australia or your State Association.

#### **Examples of new local rule options**

##### **Scoring in Stroke Play, Stableford, Par, and Maximum Score**

In view of concerns about handling and exchanging scorecards, on a temporary basis, Committees **MAY CHOOSE** to allow methods of scoring in stroke play, Stableford, Par, and Maximum Score that do not strictly comply with Rule 3.3b, or do not comply with the normal methods used under Rule 3.3b. For example:

1. Players may enter their own hole scores on the scorecard (it is not necessary for a marker to do it).
2. It is not necessary to have a marker physically certify the player's hole scores, but some form of verbal certification should take place.
3. It is not necessary to physically return a scorecard to the Committee provided the Committee can accept the scores in another way.

##### **Flagsticks**

Committees **MAY CHOOSE** to adopt the following policies:

1. Requiring players to leave the flagstick in the hole at all times. It is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it establishes this policy by Local Rule and provides a penalty for a breach of the Local Rule.
2. Not have flagsticks at all.





## Hole

Committees **MAY CHOOSE** to adopt the following policies:

1. Have course staff position the hole liner at a very shallow level so that a ball can easily be extracted without touching the sides. A ball at rest in the hole will be considered to be holed even if it is not entirely below the level of the hole. Rather than positioning the hole liner at a shallow level, many clubs are achieving the same outcome of a shallow hole by positioning small pool noodles at the bottom of the flagstick. Whether a pool noodle is used, or the hole liner is set at a very shallow level, it has become common for a player's ball to bounce out of the hole when it would normally have come to rest in the bottom of the cup. To cater for this, clubs may introduce a local rule treating a ball as holed if it hits the pool noodle or the hole liner, regardless of whether it comes to rest in the hole.]
2. Whilst discouraged, it would also be permissible for course staff to position the hole liner upside down in the hole so that a part of the liner is above the surface of the hole. The ball would be considered to be holed if it hits the liner (we emphasise that whilst this second option is permissible, it should only be pursued as a last resort and likely for social play only).

## Bunkers

If rakes have been removed from the course, or if the Committee has requested that rakes not be used, it is recognised that bunkers may not be smoothed as effectively as when rakes are on the course. But it is recommended that no modification be made to the Rules of Golf in such circumstances, and that players be requested to smooth bunkers using their feet or a club. However, if this guidance to your members does not prove to be effective, Committees **MAY CHOOSE** to introduce either of the following Local Rule options:

1. Treat all bunkers as ground under repair and in the general area, or
2. Allow preferred lies in bunkers.

## Temporary Measures for Sand Green Golf

Golf Australia and State Associations have liaised with Sand Greens Courses regarding some of the contact-management implications of playing sand-green golf.

Guidance has been sought, for example, on the hygienic use by a person of a smoother/scrapper, and on the normal practice by players of regularly removing sand from the hole.

Here are some measures currently being used at some sand green facilities. We encourage each club to choose the measures that will best fit their own local circumstances and member preferences.

## Flagsticks

An option is to remove flagsticks from all holes as most sand greens are very small with the hole positioned in the centre (or the players are locals who know where the hole is). (When flagsticks have been removed permanently from holes by a club, consider securing a flagstick directly behind the middle of each green so players can easily get a distance on a range finder.)

## Making it easier to remove the ball from the hole without touching the sides

1. Partially fill each hole with sand to reduce its depth. When a hole does need to be emptied, this action should be performed with a gloved hand (or with a towel wrapped around the fingers). Or;



2. Alternatively, place a towel/rag in the hole (just below the level of the lip) to reduce its depth. When extracting sand, you may also need to remove and then reposition the rag. The rag should be handled with a gloved hand.

A ball at rest in the hole will be considered to be holed even if it is not entirely below the level of the hole.

#### **Removing sand from the hole**

1. Place a towel/rag in the hole when smoothing (up to the level of the lip) to prevent sand from entering during the smoothing process. Or;
2. When a hole does need to be emptied, this action should be performed with a gloved hand (or with a towel wrapped around the fingers).

#### **Removing the need for players to come in direct contact with the smoother/scrapper**

1. Each group appoint one player to perform all smoothing requirements for that group. Use a towel/glove when operating a smoother/scrapper supplied at each hole by the club. Or;
2. If a suitable item can be obtained, one person in each group be tasked with carrying a cheap and lightweight item to be used to smooth instead of a heavy smoother/scrapper (provided the nature of the surface will be responsive to something light). Only that person to use this device – no other person in the group touch this device throughout the round. Or;
3. Position the hole liner upside down in the hole so that a part of the liner is above the surface of the hole. The ball would be considered to be holed if it hits the liner (we emphasise that whilst this option is permissible, it should only be pursued as a last resort).
4. Some clubs may have very few players and may even be able to remove the smoother/scrapper from the course altogether and may use their foot or putter to smooth imperfections in their line. This would also be encouraged if practical at your club.



## **SECTION 6**

GolfWA will communicate with all Western Australian golf clubs and facilities upon receiving confirmation from the Western Australian Government to provide guidance to all clubs/facilities.

This communication will contain a formalised recommendation document on return to play that will be amended based on specific government guidelines that are announced, and will cover golf operations, clubhouse operations and the temporary modifications to the rules of golf.

For any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Gary Thomas, Chief Executive, Golf Western Australia on (08) 9367 2490 or [garyt@golfwa.org.au](mailto:garyt@golfwa.org.au)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Thomas', is located below the contact information.

Gary Thomas  
Chief Executive  
June 27, 2020