

WSGA
◊ 1901 ◊

2026
RULES OFFICIAL
HANDBOOK

WSGA.ORG

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin State Golf Association is a 501[c]6 organization comprised of member golf clubs located in the state of Wisconsin and individual golfing members. The WSGA is directed by a statewide Board of Directors including officers, active past presidents and volunteer Associate Directors who donate their time and services while paying their own expenses. The daily affairs of the WSGA are managed by a full-time executive director, department heads and an administrative staff; augmented with part-time seasonal help.

In 1901, nine clubs were organized to form the Wisconsin State Golf Association. Spurred by an ongoing desire for competition, these clubs created the nucleus of what would become today's WSGA. The nine clubs making up the association consisted of Janesville Sinnissippi Golf Club, Milwaukee Country Club, Maple Bluff Country Club in Madison, Kenosha Country Club, Riverview Country Club in Appleton, Oshkosh Country Club, Schaghticoke Country Club in La Crosse, Racine Country Club and Tuscumbia Country Club in Green Lake.

Additional information on the history of the WSGA can be found here: wsga.org/about.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

The Wisconsin State Golf Association was formed and exists for the general purpose of promoting and conserving, throughout the State of Wisconsin, the best interests and true spirit of the game of golf. Included within the general purpose are:

- To cooperate with and assist the United State Golf Association and other recognized golf associations in the promotion and advancement of the game of golf.
- To hold a Wisconsin amateur championship each year and to promote and sponsor such other tournaments as may be approved by the Board of Directors.
- To establish or adopt and maintain a uniform handicap system and a uniform system for measuring and rating individual golf courses.
- To promote and assist in funding scholarships for caddies, or other approved golf-related individuals or purposes, either alone or in conjunction with other golf associations.
- To do and perform all other related acts necessary to carry out the general purposes and the foregoing specific purposes. This may include promoting and sponsoring golf trips for the benefit of members of association clubs and courses.

3. CHAMPIONSHIP & GOLF OPERATIONS

3.1 MISSION

To be the trusted leader and premier resource for the Wisconsin golfing community, providing championship-level competitions and expert support in the Rules of Golf and tournament administration for all WSGA members and member clubs.

A. VALUES

We are dedicated to providing a premium experience that honors the timeless traditions and integrity of the game. Our mission is to uphold the highest standards of the **WSGA**, ensuring that every competition is conducted with the respect, fairness, and excellence that the sport demands.

B. STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Competition and Championship Excellence

- Host premier championships across all demographics, utilizing the game’s most popular formats to engage every type of golfer.
- Provide a relevant and competitive calendar, featuring specialized events like the Senior Tour, Women’s Stableford, Net Partners, Scramble Series and short-course competitions.
- Ensure every tournament delivers a first-class experience for players and host facilities alike.

Rules Authority and Education

- Serve as Wisconsin’s primary authority on the Rules of Golf and professional tournament administration.
- Empower the golfing community through accessible outreach, including rules podcasts, review sessions and direct expert consultations.
- Provide specialized guidance and administrative support to member clubs and tournament organizers throughout the state.

Membership Value & Community Impact

- Enhance the value of a WSGA membership by showcasing the Association as a modern, indispensable resource for golfers.
- Leverage our reach to strengthen connections between the WSGA, its individual members, and member clubs.
- Cultivate and deepen relationships with host facilities and key industry partners to ensure the long-term health of the Wisconsin golf community.

Brand & Service Excellence

- Deliver “best-in-class” customer support through a dedicated team of professional staff and passionate volunteers.
- Drive brand awareness and prestige for the WSGA through high-caliber tournament operations and strategic initiatives.

3.2 PROGRAMS

Each year, the WSGA manages an extensive calendar of over 100 days of competition, including USGA, high school and collegiate championships. The prestige of these events is a direct reflection of our volunteer Rules Officials, whose dedication ensures every qualifier and tournament is held to the highest standard.

WSGA CHAMPIONSHIPS

WSGA Championships and their respective qualifiers are available to all WSGA members. These events offer an extensive schedule of premier competitions across Wisconsin, tailored to every demographic and featuring the game's most popular formats.

USGA QUALIFIERS

The WSGA facilitates the pathway to national competition by conducting 10 USGA national championship qualifiers annually, open to all eligible USGA members.

NET PARTNERS SERIES

Open to all golfers of all skill levels, the Net Partners series is a member favorite that brings a team-based dynamic to the course. In these one-day, 18-hole events, two-person teams compete using a unique scoring format that combines each player's individual net score with their team's net best-ball total. Teams are welcome in any combination – including male, female or mixed-gender pairings. Throughout the season, top performing teams from each qualifying event earn a spot in the Net Partners Championship.

SENIOR TOUR SERIES

Open to all male golfers over the age of 55, the Senior Tour series has grown into a premier, one-day, 18-hole events utilizing the Stableford scoring system. Competitors vie for both gross and net prizes within Senior, Super-Senior and Legends division while earning points toward the Senior Tour Player of the Year Standings. Throughout the season-long series, the top point-leaders earn an invitation to the Senior Tour Championship.

Expanding our reach in 2024, the WSGA now hosts a dedicated Senior Tour event exclusively for women of all skill levels aged 50 and older.

SCRAMBLE SERIES

Open to all golfers of all skill levels, the Scramble series is a growing member favorite that brings a team-based dynamic to the course. This series features one-day, 18-hole, two-person scramble events offering both Gross and Net Divisions. Teams are welcome in any combination – including male, female, or mixed-gender pairings. Throughout the season, top performing teams from each qualifying event earn a spot in the Scramble Series Championship. Additionally, the WSGA recently established a dedicated Women's Scramble Championship, with its top teams also qualifying for the season-ending Scramble Series Championship.

PARENT-CHILD

The WSGA celebrates family and tradition through its premier lineup of parent-child championships, designed to be inclusive of parents, children, grandchildren, and stepchildren. These statewide events include the Mother-Daughter, Mother-Son and Father-Daughter championships, which all utilize a modified alternate-shot format. The storied Father-Son championship remains a member favorite, featuring a traditional alternate-shot format. To ensure all family configurations can participate, Open divisions are available in all events where one team member is a golf professional. Across the entire series, teams compete for prizes in both Gross and Net, ensuring a rewarding experience for every family pairing.

HUSBAND-WIFE / COUPLES

The Husband-Wife/Couples Championship is a premier one-day, 18-hole event featuring an engaging 6-6-6 format, where teams compete across six holes each of Best Ball, Alternate Shot, and Scramble.

The competition is designed to ensure a competitive experience for every pairing, with prizes awarded to both Gross and Net winners, as well as the Couples Champion. Additionally, an Open Division is available for teams that include a golf professional.

JUNIOR BOYS CHAMPIONSHIP

As Wisconsin's most prestigious and oldest junior championship, this 54-hole stroke-play event is open to boys under the age of 19. Competitors are divided into three-age brackets – 14 & Under, 15-16 and 17-18 – with an overall champion crowned at the conclusion of the tournament.



3.3 STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

11350 W. Theo Trecker Way – West Allis, WI 53214 – (414) 443-3560 – info@wsga.org

Contact Information for WSGA Staff can be found by [clicking HERE](#).

4. GENERAL

4.1 CODE OF CONDUCT

A. GENERAL

The WSGA is a membership organization, and our competitions are designed specifically for our members and the Wisconsin golf community. When serving as a Rules Official, you represent the WSGA. Whether you are a new volunteer, a seasoned veteran or a Board member, your interaction with a player defines our brand and may be their only direct contact with the organization.

As a representative of the WSGA, the quality of your interaction with participants is just as vital as the accuracy of your rulings – we strive for both to be spot on. To maintain this high standard and ensure a professional experience for every golfer, Rules Officials should:

- **Prioritize a Positive Presence:** Approach every player in a friendly, helpful and professional manner to ensure a great experience.
- **Investigate Thoroughly:** Always collect the full details of a situation before offering a ruling or taking action.
- **Intervene Strategically:** Respect the players' space and only step in when asked or when a situation clearly requires your assistance.
- **Protect the Player:** Aim to prevent penalties before they happen; if you notice a player about to make an error, your primary role is to help them avoid it.

The primary goal in every interaction is to ensure that, regardless of the ruling, you leave the situation better than you found it. While you may occasionally have to deliver a tough ruling or manage a difficult personality, your role is to remain the calm, professional anchor on the course. If a situation escalates to the point where disciplinary action seems necessary, please step back and notify a WSGA staff member to resolve it. Beyond these core behavioral standards, please ensure that you are familiar with all the policies and procedures detailed in this handbook.

B. ALCOHOL & SMOKING

To uphold the highest standards of the WSGA, Rules Officials are strictly prohibited from smoking or consuming alcoholic beverages while on assignment. It is essential that your conduct remains exemplary and above any possible criticism, as your primary responsibility is to safeguard the field and preserve the integrity of both the competition and the organization.

C. SAFETY

In the event of an injury, medical emergency, or accidental damage to golf course property, please notify a WSGA staff member immediately. This same urgency applies if you witness any situation during your assignment that could compromise the safety of participants or staff.

4.2 DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS OF A RULES OFFICIAL (REFEREE)

A. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rules officials, together with the WSGA staff are responsible for the on-site administration of all WSGA events as well as all USGA qualifying events to ensure each event aligns with the Rules of Golf and WSGA tournament policies. Duties may vary from event to event and may include any of the following: starting, roving, timing, scoring, or serving as a forecaddie or marker. When assigned to work at an event, each Rules Official will report to the WSGA staff person in charge of the event, and such WSGA staff person will determine the duties to be handled by each Rules Official.

B. QUALIFICATIONS

In addition to possessing a solid knowledge of the Rules of Golf and a genuine desire to continue improving that knowledge, Rules officials must possess the following qualities and qualifications:

1. **Professionalism:** Exceptional interpersonal skills when interacting with players and host facilities to represent the WSGA at the highest level.
2. **Empathy:** A sensitive and respectful approach towards both competitors and fellow officials.
3. **Informed Decision Making:** An ability to analyze the situation and make a fair and impartial decision.
4. **Versatility:** Availability to serve a minimum of five (5) tournament days per calendar year.
5. **Memberships Status:** Current member of the WSGA.

4.3 SERVING AS A WISCONSIN RULES OFFICIAL

To serve as a Rules Official at WSGA events, you must (1) be USGA Rules Certified or WSGA Rules Certified, (2) complete a tournament ride along for new Rules Officials, (3) participate in the mentoring program for new Rules officials and (4) commit to officiating at least five (5) tournament days per year.

A. WSGA RULES CERTIFIED

The USGA offers several in-person and virtual rules workshops each year, along with 80-question and 100-question exams (a fee applies). The goal of these exams is to establish a level of rules certification across the country for all rules officials. The USGA has established two levels of USGA Rules Certification:

- **USGA Expert Certified:** Achieving a score of 90 or higher on the PGA/USGA 100-question exam offered at a PGA/USGA workshop or offered virtually.
- **USGA Advanced Certified:** Achieving a score of 75 or higher on the PGA/USGA 100-question exam offered at a PGA/USGA workshop or offered virtually, or achieving a score of 70 or higher on the PGA/USGA 80-question exam offered at a PGA/USGA workshop or virtually. In addition, the 80-question exam may be taken at the WSGA office.

If you are either USGA Expert Certified or USGA Advanced Certified, you are automatically WSGA Rules Certified. In addition, you can become WSGA Rules Certified by achieving a score of 60 or higher on the PGA/USGA 80-question exam.

- Arrangements can be made to take the 80-question exam at the WSGA office by contacting a WSGA staff member (at no cost).
- Individuals may only take the WSGA proctored exam once per calendar year.
- Individuals who take the 100-question exam at a PGA/USGA workshop or virtually, may also take the 80-question exam proctored by the WSGA in the same calendar year.
- The WSGA proctored exam can only be taken in person, not virtually.

B. TOURNAMENT RIDE ALONG

All first year Rules Officials must complete a one-day ride along with a veteran WSGA Rules Official, assigned by the WSGA staff. This will provide you with a firsthand look at all duties of a Rules Official, including serving as a starter, rover, timer or scorer.

C. MENTORING PROGRAM

During your first year, each new Rules Official will be paired with a mentor selected from our group of veteran Rules Officials. Mentors will serve as a dedicated resource and will be available to answer questions regarding being a Rules Official.

4.4 YEARLY EVALUATION OF RULES OFFICIALS

All Rules Officials are subject to an annual review to ensure that their performance and Rules knowledge continue to meet the high standards required of all WSGA volunteers.

A. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the end of each year the WSGA staff will gather feedback from other staff members, participants, Rule Officials and volunteers to determine if you performed your duties consistent with the qualities and qualifications described in Section 4.2B above. If, according to the WSGA staff's judgment, you have not satisfactorily performed your duties consistent with those qualities and qualifications you will not be eligible to serve as a Rules Official for any WSGA events.

B. WSGA RULES CERTIFIED

You must be WSGA Rules Certified based on the 2023 Rules of Golf.

If you became WSGA Rules Certified based on a prior version of the Rules of Golf, you must take a PGA/USGA exam based on the 2023 Rules of Golf and achieve a score that makes you WSGA Rules Certified by May 1st, 2027.

When new Rules of Golf become effective, (currently set for January 2028) you must take a PGA/USGA exam based on the new Rules and achieve a score that makes you WSGA Rules Certified by not later than 16 months after the new Rules become effective (which under the 2028 Rules would be by (May 1st, 2029).

If you are no longer WSGA Rules Certified, you will not be eligible to serve as a Rules Official for any WSGA events.



4.5 REGISTRATION & ASSIGNMENTS

A. TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION

In February, the upcoming tournament schedule and registration portal instructions will be sent out to all volunteers. This allows you to select your preferred assignments for the season. Once all requests are reviewed, WSGA staff will provide a confirmed schedule for each Rules Official.

- Locations that receive more requests than available spots will result in cuts made by the WSGA staff.
- Emails to all undersubscribed events will be sent out to volunteers for additional sign-ups.
- Overall goal is to at minimum have one Rules Official at each event.

B. ABSENCES

If availability changes and you can no longer work your scheduled assignment, you should contact the WSGA staff as soon as possible. Timely communication is essential, as late withdrawals or failure to provide notice can compromise the successful administration of a tournament. Consistent absenteeism or pattern of late withdrawals may result in being ineligible for future volunteer assignments.

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND TOURNAMENT INFORMATION

At least 24 hours before each event, WSGA staff will email all volunteers with their specific arrival times and assignments. For tournaments featuring a shotgun start, any assignments not finalized in the pre-event email will be distributed during the staff briefing, approximately 30 minutes prior to play.

Before each event, essential tournament details, including starting times, pairings, WSGA Hard Card and Tournament Policies, are available on the official tournament website. All necessary physical paperwork and volunteer materials will be provided to you upon arrival at the site.

4.6 UNIFORMS & SUPPLIES

To ensure a professional and recognizable presence on-site, all Rules Officials are required to wear the official WSGA “field uniform” at all association-sponsored and external events. The full uniform policy can be reviewed below:

SHIRT

- White WSGA polo shirt, unless another color is distributed.

BOTTOMS

- Khaki, stone, gray or navy pants (shorts are not permitted).
 - Additionally, women may wear khaki, stone, gray or navy capris, skirts, skorts or shorts.
- Neither cargo pants nor cargo shorts are permitted.

OUTERWEAR

- Any color or style WSGA-branded outerwear may be worn at WSGA competitions.
- If additional outerwear is needed to protect yourself from the weather (e.g. cold temperatures, rain, etc.), the additional outerwear doesn't have to be WSGA branded.

FOOTWEAR

- Comfortable and appropriate shoes suitable for a golf course. This may include golf shoes, tennis shoes, or other similar footwear.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Hats must be WSGA-branded
- Rules officials must wear their WSGA name badge at all competitions.

The WSGA provides each Rules Official with the essential required uniform items (polo shirt, outerwear piece, name badge, WSGA hat). Additionally, annual clothing order is available for those wishing to purchase supplemental gear, such as long-sleeve layers or rain equipment. Rules Officials may also purchase WSGA-branded apparel intended for personal use.

4.7 EXPENSES & PROVIDED EQUIPMENT

All WSGA Rules Officials are responsible for their own travel and personal expenses related to tournament assignments. To support our volunteers, the WSGA will provide food & beverage options throughout the event. Additionally, all new officials will receive a dedicated radio earpiece. At each event, Rules Officials will receive a rules flag that attaches to their motorized cart for identification.



5. TOURNAMENT DAY PROCEDURES

5.1 ARRIVAL TIME

Rules Officials should arrive at the designated time and location provided on their assignment details. Upon arrival, you will receive your radio and all necessary tournament paperwork and supplies. The WSGA staff will then conduct a brief review of assignments, Local Rules and any essential event information.

5.2 ON-COURSE DUTIES

A. COURSE SETUP

Before each tournament, WSGA staff will evaluate the course to select hole locations and teeing areas, mark all boundaries and penalty areas, and prepare the Notice to Players. On the day of the event, designated officials will be assigned to verify that the course setup—specifically tee-marker placement and hole location accuracy—meets all WSGA specifications.

B. FUNCTIONS OF A ROVER

Rovers are generally assigned to a certain area of the course to provide additional support and oversight to Rules Officials assigned to a specific hole(s). Specific responsibilities include:

- Familiarity with the area of the course you're roving.
- Checking with Rules Officials to discuss potential issues on their hole(s), clarifying local rules, and defining ground under repair. This can also be an opportunity to train other Rules Officials to ensure that rulings are being handled accurately and appropriately.
- Assisting Rules Officials with rulings and/or providing a second opinion.
- Monitoring and enforcing pace of play, including speaking with players when necessary.
- Ensuring fellow Rules Officials can take breaks throughout the day and cover their assignment when needed.

C. FUNCTIONS OF A STARTER

The WSGA identifies the starter as the essential first point of contact for our players. As the individual responsible for setting the tone of the round, the starter ensures a consistent, professional and “championship-level” experience for every participant.

To ensure a seamless start, the starter should arrive at their assigned teeing area at least 20 minutes before the first starting time to complete the following:

- **Teeing Area Setup:** Position the starter's table to provide a professional appearance and ample space for the players to tee off.
- **Equipment Check:** Verify that the starter's box is fully stocked with all necessary supplies.
- **Clock & Radio Check:** Ensure the official clock is clearly visible to all players and coordinate the “official time” over the radio.
- **Dress Code Compliance:** Verify that all players meet the WSGA dress code policy. Only report violations to the staff in charge – no action is needed if players are properly attired.
- **Scoring Coordination:** Confirm the exact location of the scoring area (if applicable) to properly direct players to certify their scores after the round. Assist with setting up electronic scoring using the WSGA mobile app. One (1) player in each group must enter scores for the entire group.
- All other information will be communicated in the “starters instructions”.

D. SCORING GUIDELINES

- **SCORING AREA**

It is the responsibility of this assignment to see that all official scorecards are returned or properly submitted on the WSGA mobile app. Only players, WSGA staff/ Rules Officials on duty and caddies, if requested by the players, shall have access to the scoring area or system. All conversations should be kept to a minimum. Each scorecard returned must have 18 individually identifiable scores and two signatures (paper scoring method) or one signature on mobile app and verbal certification from all other players in the group.

- **MARKERS**

Occasionally, officials are assigned as markers for a player or side. While you may have the option to play along, your primary responsibility is to serve as a marker. In the event of a mid-round withdrawal that leaves a single player in a group, an official may be assigned to ride with them and act as a marker until the WSGA staff provides further instruction.

E. POSITIONING & USE OF GOLF CARTS

Unless assigned as a walking referee, Rules Officials will be provided with a golf cart to use safely and in accordance with club policy. Carts should be parked where they will not distract players or interfere with play. When positioning yourself, prioritize locations that allow you to observe the field, assist players, and maintain radio communication, while always ensuring your own safety and that of the participants.

- Be familiar with your area and situations that may occur in your area. If any additional marking is required, notify a WSGA staff member. Make sure to review:
 - Dropping Zones
 - Ground Under Repair markings and potential areas
 - Maintenance problems
 - Out of Bounds markings and locations
 - Obstructions
 - Penalty Areas marking and locations
- Be alert for any gaps in play or groups that are playing slower than their allotted pace of play. Notify rovers if a group is not in position as provided in the Pace of Play Policy.
- Notify the WSGA staff of any significant rulings during the day. Be alert for any potential rules incidents with a player. Our job is to prevent rules infractions before they happen rather than waiting and then penalizing the player.
- Use the radio with discretion. Always attempt to use your earpiece.
- Items you should always have with you:
 - Official Guide to the Rules of Golf / Rule of Golf Book
 - WSGA or USGA Hard Card
 - Pairing sheet
 - Pace of Play / Timing Sheet
 - Notice to Players / Hole Locations
 - Radio with earpiece
 - Watch or stopwatch for recording times
 - Tees, pencils and club scorecard
 - Rules flag for motorized cart (provided by the WSGA)
 - Miscellaneous items including Band-aids, sunscreen, phone charger, etc.

F. RULINGS

Rules officials are encouraged to gain on-course experience by assisting with rulings whenever necessary. Our goal is to protect the field through accurate decisions rather than micro-managing the process. **If you are ever uncertain, you must contact a rover or WSGA staff member for assistance.**

Procedures and Rules Knowledge

All officials should be proficient in handling on-course issues. At a minimum, you should be familiar with:

- Rule 20.1c(3): Playing a second ball in Stroke Play.
- Rule 20.1b (2): Requesting a ruling in Match Play.

These rules allow play to continue without delay, permitting the Committee to make a final decision later if needed.

Interacting with Players

When approaching a player, a simple **“How can I help?”** is the best starting point. Carefully assess the situation to determine if you are qualified to resolve it. If you are certain, provide the ruling and explain the player’s options. However, if there is any doubt, use your radio. It is far better to confirm an answer than to provide an incorrect ruling that could disadvantage a player or lead to an uncorrectable error.

Accuracy Over Speed

The primary safeguard against mistakes is to gather all the facts. If you have limited experience or the situation is complex, do not hesitate to say *“I want to get a second opinion to ensure we make the correct decision.”* While admitting you aren’t sure can be difficult, it is much harder to reverse a wrong decision after the fact.

Match Play Roles

In Match Play, Rules officials may serve as referees or observers. If you are a referee assigned to a specific match, you are responsible for acting on any breach of the Rules that you see or are told about.

G. RELIEF FROM ASSIGNED AREA

If you need to leave your assigned area for more than 10 minutes, notify a rover or a WSGA staff member. Once your duties are complete and all players have cleared your area, check in with the WSGA staff to see if assistance is needed elsewhere. If you need to leave for:

- A restroom break; just go.
- A lunch break, call the rover or WSGA staff so he/she can arrange a replacement if necessary.
- At the end of the day, please arrange to turn in radio to staff.



5.3 PLAYER CONDUCT & WITHDRAWALS

A. PLAYER CONDUCT

Please notify WSGA staff of any unbecoming or inappropriate conduct by players or caddies. The WSGA maintains a zero-tolerance policy for such behavior, which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Willful damage of the golf course or golf course property.
- Club throwing or unnecessary club tossing.
- Offensive or inappropriate language.
- Public criticism of golf course or verbal abuse to WSGA staff, officials, volunteers, host club staff or other contestants.
- Potential endangerment of others.
- Conduct deemed inappropriate.
- Failure to post scores for handicapping purposes.
- Manipulation of scores posted for handicapping purposes.

B. PLAYER WITHDRAWALS

All players are expected to complete every competition they start, as the WSGA only recognizes injury, illness, or emergency as valid reasons for withdrawal. Poor play is never an acceptable excuse. Any player who withdraws without a valid reason or fails to notify WSGA personnel may be suspended from future competitions. If a player anticipates an upcoming withdrawal, they must notify the WSGA as soon as possible and ideally before the next day's pairings are announced.

Furthermore, every player who starts a round is required to personally return their scorecard to a WSGA staff member or official, regardless of their withdrawal status. If an official assists a player who wishes to withdraw, they must ensure the player signs and attests the hole-by-hole scores on the scorecard they were keeping for a fellow competitor before that card is returned to the group. After these scoring duties are fulfilled, the official may shuttle the withdrawing player back to the clubhouse by cart. Failure to follow these specific protocols may result in being banned from future WSGA events.

