

Blind Golf Training Manual

Coaching guide and Playing Procedures



- Standardized practices and playing procedures
- Learn to effectively and consistently coach the Blind golfer
- Allows the blind player to train with multiple partners, and have several coaches available
- Introduces blind golfers and coach's tried - and - true routines used by the finest blind golfers in the world

The Blind Golf Training Manual

Coaching guide and playing procedures

Developed and written by Robert Kotowski P.G.A. With Howard Shaw, President American Blind and Disabled Golf Association

Photography by Michael Kotowski

- This program was conceived and developed with one objective, to contribute to improving the performance and golf experience of the blind Golfer.
- This manual was designed to assist blind golfers and their coaches in establishing a standardized procedure, practice, and on course playing routine, that would consistently promote the player and coaches best performance.
- Working together as a team with a step by step, tried and true guideline for successful performance, the player and coach are able to develop an efficient and seamless partnership.
- Once the individual's peak performance routine is identified, it can then be taught to a number of coaches, making them available to assist the blind golfer so that he can perform at that person's highest level, regardless of who the coach may be on a given day.

Acknowledgements

The following have made this project possible:

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Howard Shaw - Founder

American Blind and Disabled Golf Association

Bruce Hooper - Co Director American Blind Golf Association

Foreword by Robert Toski, PGA of America Hall of Fame

Concept, program development and text by Robert Kotowski, PGA
Director of Golf Village Country Club Lompoc, California

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Photography by Michael Kotowski

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Acknowledgement

It is important to know how one man's influence can have such an important impact so many other people.

Every one involved in this project, and every one I am involved with on a daily basis is subjected to one philosophy when it comes to this great game, and life in general.

Enjoy Golf , enjoy life! We are all blessed, and every day is what you make of it!

Golf is a game, and it's for fun! Put the effort in to learn it correctly, and you will reap great rewards. Not just for score, but for the whole experience.

Playing good golf is about having a foundation of solid fundamentals, combined with feel, timing, rhythm, a good imagination, positive thoughts and a good attitude! The Toski Philosophy.

No where is this more evident than in Blind and Disabled golf.

I attribute the understanding and focus on this philosophy, to the many experiences gained in 50 years in golf, and to one person in particular, Mr. Bob Toski.

Toski's lessons about golf and life have inspired myself and countless others.

Bob Toski, the top player, and, leading money winner on the PGA tour in 1954, has been helping golfers both play better and enjoy the game to its fullest for more than 60 years.

On behalf of the countless people, in and out of golf, who have been positively affected first hand, or indirectly through his students over the years; thank you Mr. Toski.

Mr. Toski was recently inducted into the PGA of America hall of fame in February of 2013, and is arguably considered to be the finest golf instructor in the world.

Prologue

Howard Shaw

Founder - American Blind and Disabled Golf Association

Teaching sighted golfers the art of coaching Visually Impaired Golfers

When properly taught and coached, blind and visually impaired golfers can enjoy a great golf experience and even compete with sighted golfers on a competitive level.

The objective of this coaching manual is to provide the sighted golfer or coach a standardized method of coaching, so there is a uniformity in teaching that will provide the Blind and visually impaired player an available pool of qualified coaches. This will allow the Blind and Disabled golfer more opportunities to participate in the great game of golf.

A lack of available Coaches prohibits the blind and impaired golfer from participating on an even par with their peers.

Most sighted golfers feel that they are not capable of being a coach. This Coaches Manual will dispel that feeling and give them the necessary assurance of qualification.

This Coaches Manual will establish a method of golf play which will ensure a greater participation of blind golfers, ensure confidence and speed up play on the course.

We intend to distribute this Coaches Manual to as many organizations as possible, such as the Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs.

We greatly appreciate your support in this worth program.

Introducing the player to the golf course and facility



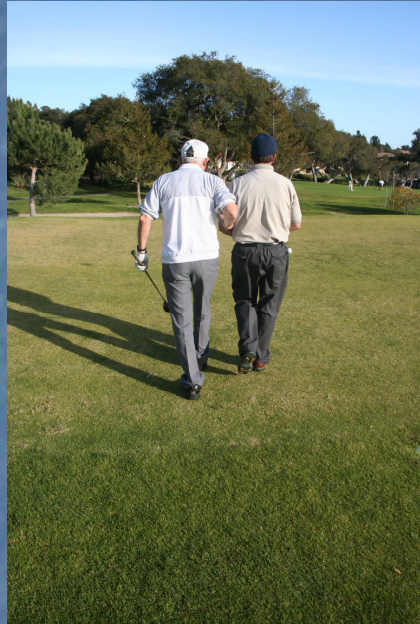
- When arriving at the course, it is important to know in advance the proximity of the golf shop, restrooms, practice areas, and first tee.
- Your PGA Professional is committed to help in any way to make your experience at the course enjoyable. Feel free to ask his or her advise on managing the round.



Planning the round

- There are many factors that contribute to making the entire day a good experience
- This includes being familiar with the facility, the course layout, general playing conditions. Good information and preparation will contribute a great deal to better performance.
- Do your homework, whether it be for a blind player or yourself. Become aware of the playing conditions.
- Find out what type of greens they have and what speed to expect. Is it hilly or flat. What types of approaches, obstacles, or bunkers etc. should we prepare for? Practice accordingly.
- A quick phone call to the host PGA professional will help you gather this important information.

Approaching the ball



- Make sure that your approach to the ball, and pre-shot routine are standardized
- Proceed to the ball for at least five paces on a straight line to the target
- The coach should stop approximately 12 inches directly in front of the ball, allowing the player to stop and turn 90 degrees, and be reasonably square to the target. The stop position should be 12 inches in front of the ball, and 12 inches left of the ball. (for right handed players)
- This should place the player's club right at the ball. Make adjustments to fine tune this to fit the individual player's address position.
- If the player's routine includes a practice swing (I strongly recommend using a practice swing as a component of the blind golf routine) the stopping point should be about 18 inches in front and 18 inches left of the ball. Adjust for personal preference and the individual's swing.

Approaching the ball: continued

At this point the set up will be reasonably square and solid. This gives you the opportunity to have a solid foundation for each shot, and the ability to fine tune the player's set up for the shot at hand.

Pay careful attention to ball position in relation to the club selection, and alignment.

Be sure to account for slope and lie.

If you are unfamiliar with any of these key factors, refer to a basic fundamentals instructional manual or ask the advice of a qualified PGA Professional for direction in this area. I recommend reading "How to become a complete golfer" written by Bob Toski and Jim flick. Chapter 5

Feedback....describe the shot



- The blind golfer, the same as any golfer needs to associate the character and outcome of the shot with the characteristics and feel of the swing.
- It is very important to give a complete description of the shot to the player.
- Be sure to include line, trajectory, shape, contact, distance, and outcome, in relation to the planned shot.

Reading the greens, and developing distance control



- Developing and maintaining distance control is the most important skill in golf for any player, and poses a particular challenge for the Blind Golfer
- Pacing the length of the shot is a valuable tool for the coach and player to use.
- Practicing distance control for both putting and chipping is the key to controlling distance on the course. (Refer to reference drills)
- Generally, trial and error, as well as good communication are your best teachers here.

Pace the length of your chips and putts.



- Be in the habit of pacing off your shots before and after you play them. This helps to develop feel and distance skills through immediate feedback.
- Be sure to relate green speed, and slope
- This can be done readily with out undue delay as you are walking to the next shot. This is a great playing habit for Blind golf.

The round

- The round starts on the practice putting green
- Establish a feel of the greens for the day
- Be sure to become familiar with your routine, and know the players tendencies
- Establish good communication of the player's pre-shot routine.
- Note the tendencies and account for them.
- In example, identify wet grass, dry conditions, cold weather,etc and how will this affect our distance and the outcome of the golf shots

The Round... continued

■ The chipping green and range

- I have an old saying that I probably stole from Bob Toski, it goes like this: "you can hit your small bucket of balls on the range , or on the first couple of holes, its up to you"
- Meaning : **Warm up before you play!** (There are 35 balls in a bucket) that's a lot of shots to waste on the first three holes.
- You must develop your feel for the game prior to taking it out on the course.
- Rule of thumb.... **Hit `em till your happy!** Which simply means hit the shots that you are going to face on the course, and identify what it feels like when you execute well. Now we have a reference and a plan when faced with the same shot during the round.

Let's play some golf

- There is a rhythm to your swing, a rhythm to your routine, and a rhythm to your round , FIND it and maintain it throughout the day.

By now you should have confidence in your swing mechanics, your set up procedure, the feel of the course, and of good execution.

Remember..... "Too much thinking makes for stinking."

We are playing golf now! It's time to focus on playing, and playing is about planning, feel, timing, rhythm, self control, and focus.

It's' also about staying rational and relentless!

That just means put your best effort into each and every shot, accept the outcome, continue that procedure and keep moving forward .

The first tee

- Ideally, walk from the range to the tee, having already addressed and identified your rhythm, the feel of a great tee shot, and confidence.
- Establish awareness, breath fully, walk calmly and relax.
- A picture or awareness in your minds eye of the feel of your best tee shot is a pretty good thought for all players to take to the first tee.
- Practice imaging or feeling this.

Approaching the golf car



- Plan ahead and have a set routine to enter golf cars
- Common sense habits will streamline our movements and avoid painful bumps and bruises, as well as add style and flow to our round
- Walk to a point even with the seat of the car and stop at the player's arm's length from the roof, or seat back

Approaching the golf car (continued)

- Player can extend left arm to feel handle on roof, be aware of proximity, and enter car without difficulty.
- It cannot be overstated, that the better we feel about all of our actions at the course, and the more comfortable we are through routine, the better we will perform.



Approaching obstructions



- When approaching obstructions such as curbs , steps ,trash cans, etc. Develop the habit of communicating 15 to 20 feet prior to the object. This makes it easier to gauge and adjust to the obstacle.

Short game fundamentals

Address these important keys to success

- Weight distribution
- Width of stance
- Shorten up on club
- Length of swing
- Club selection
- Practice drills to develop skills around the green

Recommended reading :How to become a complete Golfer, Toski/Flick to establish foundation of fundamentals

Short Game Fundamentals

- In General, there are a handful of keys to controlling distance around the greens. The rules are as follows ... as the need for distance is reduced
- 1 Reduce the width of the players stance.
- 2 Establish more weight on the front foot, effectively reducing available weight transfer.
- 3 Shorten up on the club, and shorten up on the swing.
- 4 Try to maintain the same rhythm, timing and amount of effort and exertion for each swing. If these remain constant, then the adjustments for stance, weight distribution, and swing width will give you a built in ability to control distance.
- 5 Conversely, as the need for distance increases, adjust the width of stance (increase), adjust the weight distribution appropriately and increase the length of the swing

PRACTICE

Pitch Shots

- Basically, proper positioning, and regulating the length of swing are the main keys to being successful with these critical shots
- Standardizing your alignment and ball position procedure, is imperative for consistent ball contact. Even slightly miss hit shots can be disastrous over bunkers and obstacles. Well executed shots on the other hand, are extremely rewarding.
- The basic pitch shot, or half swing, is also the foundation of every players full swing, and therefore requires extra attention and practice.

Develop distance control with reference drills

- The number one skill in golf is the ability to control distance! For sighted players, a visual reference for learning to gauge distance is used as much as feel.
- For the blind golfer, it' all about feel and feedback.
- You need to create a consistent, standardized practice regimen, utilizing references for distance when developing this area of the game.

Distance control (continued)

- Developing distance control skills by using practice drills is imperative!
- We use short term reference in practice, and relate these experiences with long term reference on the golf course.
- A specific drill designed to establish and reinforce the ability to feel distance and associate verbal distance cues with the correct length of stroke, is the “three ball drill”.
- Basically, we practice hitting short, medium and long putts back and forth across the putting green. Repeat this exercise uphill, down hill, left to right, and right to left, until we are able to meet our objective, which is to execute putts that end up close to the hole on all attempts.(within a three foot circle is acceptable)
- It is important to pace the target distances together, and to measure the lengths accurately, giving reference to the characteristics of the putts: In example.... 5 feet moderately uphill, 25 feet moderately uphill, and 50 feet moderately uphill. Or 5 feet, down hill and quick.
- Stimp meter references are also very helpful

Distance control drills

- We use the same drills for establishing our short game off the green as well
- Develop a chipping practice routine that establishes reference for short, medium, and long chip and run shots (6 or 7 iron), as well as medium trajectory shots, (9 iron), and higher lofts, using the sand wedge and L wedge
- Initially refer to the lengths in general to define the feel for short, medium, and long shots. As the skill level progresses and merits, gradually get more specific. For example 15, 30, and 80 feet for chip shot, and 10, 20, and 30 yards for pitch shots.
- The rule of thumb is to practice at the performance level that is appropriate for the player's skill level and experience.
- Then, practice at the level you want to perform at on the golf course. In example: three chips in a row, inside 3ft



Short ,medium ,long ..reference drill



Feedback for distance control

- In general, relate distance in yards for any full shot, as well as all approaches to greens. It is very important to practice accurate pacing for yardage, in order for the player to develop a consistent feel for distance. Use of a laser, or GPS device is recommended, but should be associated with standard pacing or yardage feedback to be of effective use.

Feedback for distance control around the green

- Distance reference on the green should always be in feet and inches. There is a need to be consistent.
- Constant and accurate feed back, before and after the shot is required in order to become skilled on, and around the greens. It is very important to become acutely aware of distance , slope, grain and firmness.
- Working together to develop communication of the feel for distance in practice, pays off in success during the round.

Putting alignment/Team work

- Brian MaCleod, 6 time Canadian Open Champion and Brian Smith are a perfect example of the team effort required to play championship blind golf.

Standard procedure is the same for putting as with all shots.

Walk in line to the target, stop 12 inches from the ball .Turn and set up.

MaCleod and Smith Line up another successful putt, en route to a 5th California Blind Golf Classic title.



Distance control: pitches and scoring shots around the green

- When approaching greens ALWAYS relate carry distance in yards, and distance to the hole in feet. In example, a pitch shot over a bunker should be: “fifteen yards to carry the bunker, and fifty feet, slightly uphill to the hole.”
- An accurate description of slope, speed and firmness of green, grain and break are very important . The feedback after the shot is equally important in order to develop a reference for future shots.

Using restroom facilities

- Approach the restroom together, offer as much information as possible about the layout, then lead player to stall entrance.



Pitch Shots over bunkers and other obstacles



- When approaching a green over a bunker, the most important piece of information is the amount of carry needed to clear the hazard or obstacle.
- Relate the carry to the green in yards, and roll out to the hole in feet
- In example, we have 15 yards to carry onto the green, and 35 feet roll out to the cup

Practice distance control and reference

- Use practice drills to develop feel for distance, and establish references and communication.
- As a rule, practice hitting shots in increasing or decreasing increments. This will allow easy association to the previous shot, relation to the increase or decrease in the length of swing, and its relation to the carry and roll of the shot.
- Remember, direct and specific feed back is crucial.

Pace the length of your chips and putts.



- Be in the habit of pacing off your shots before and after you play them. This helps to develop feel and distance skills through immediate feedback.
- Be sure to relate green speed, and slope
- This can be done readily with out undue delay as you are walking to the next shot. This is a great playing habit for a Blind golf team.

Selecting the club



- Player and coach work together, discussing all of the aspects of the shot at hand. Distance, slope, wind, trajectory, and shot planning all contribute to the player's "feel" of the shot to be played.
- This process should start well before we arrive at the ball, so that our pace of play is efficient, and the rhythm, pace and flow of our standard routine is not interfered with.

BALL POSITION



- Practicing and controlling ball position is critical for the blind golfer, as it is for all players.
- Solid standard fundamentals dictate proper ball position for the blind golfer. Be aware of your center of balance.
- The rule of thumb is to play the shortest club in the bag (wedge) in the center of your stance, and the rest of the clubs progressively forward, toward the forward foot. (driver off the left heel or instep) [For a righthanded player]

Ball Position (Continued)

- Developing consistent ball position awareness, fundamentals and control is critical to playing quality golf.
- The player can make a perfect swing, but if the ball is not in the optimum position, the result will be a wayward shot .
- The concept of making one simple swing, inserting the proper club , and positioning the ball in relation to the selected club is very important, in an effort to maintain consistent performance.

BALL POSITION



- A set of clubs ranges in length in 1/2 inch increments, so progressively position the ball further forward and away from the player as the club gets longer.
- Basically we want to make one swing, insert clubs, and account for the changes in the length of your clubs.



Set Up Solid

- Solid fundamentals are important
- Carefully establish a solid routine that includes proper alignment, grip, posture, ball position, and rhythm

Setting up Square to the Target

- This is one of the most important aspects of the game for the blind golfer. For all shots, this must be done consistently, and with confidence!
- This allows the player to trust his setup and be committed to swinging the club freely.



Set up square



- Remember to rehearse your set up routine! The smoother this process goes the more confidence it instills. A consistent, comfortable pre-shot routine removes seeds of doubt, and promotes better golf.

Practice full swing fundamentals

Develop an awareness for correct position at the top of the swing

- Practice repeatedly with guidance to develop feel and confidence in the players swing
- Ask your PGA professional to help you with swing mechanics
- Be sure to work on correct swing habits and proper motion in the golf swing

It is important to have a balance of practice , swing development and playing time to insure your best performance



Ball Position (Continued)

- Developing consistent ball position awareness, fundamentals and control is critical to playing quality golf.
- The player can make a perfect swing, but if the ball is not in the optimum position, the result will be a wayward shot .
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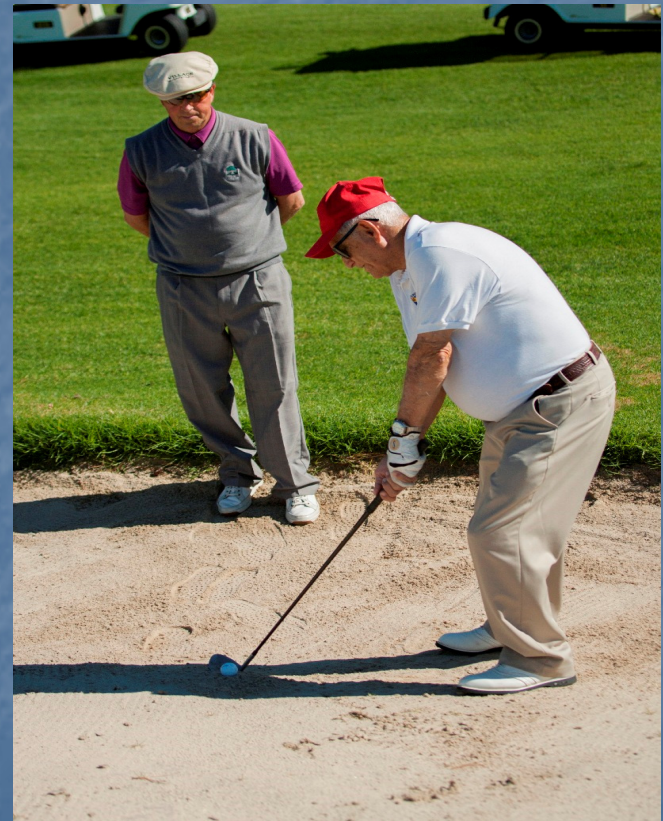
Sand Play Fundamentals

- Proper setup is critical
- Establish ball position 2-4 inches forward of normal wedge position to insure contact with the sand prior to the ball



Sand Play Fundamentals

- Proper setup is critical for consistent execution
- Blind Golf rules allow a player to ground the club in a hazard.
- Set club in sand comfortably 2-3 inches behind the ball
- Bring an aggressive swing (about a 3/4 wedge swing)



Sand play

- Playing out of bunkers is challenging for the visually impaired, but given a good understanding, and proper setup, solid execution is manageable
- The main keys are to understand clearly how important proper setup is, and that a disproportionately large a swing is necessary.
- The player must be committed to an aggressive swing! The more club head speed that is generated, the greater the margin of error and success.
- It is recommended that the player be prepared to make a swing that would produce a shot of 40-50 yards off the turf, about a $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ wedge, as a baseline for basic bunker shots of 40-50 feet.



Sand play

- Another option, is to evaluate the lip of the bunker and putt the ball out.
- This is a valuable shot option, provided it is not used as a crutch because you cannot handle a proper bunker shot.
- Practice ,practice, practice! Confidence is everything in the sand, and confidence comes from success. Success comes from quality practice, and good honest evaluation.

Hazards, procedures and rules

- In a hazard, routine and swing execution remain the same.
- It is within the rules of Blind Golf to ground the club in any hazard. This includes bunker play.
- Be prepared for unusual lies, slopes and awkward situations.
- Practice side hill lies, as well as heavy and thin lies, so you will be familiar with such situations when they arise.

When in doubt of balance and safety.
Take a drop!



Practice your set up procedure

- For all shots, caddy/coach should always start three to five paces behind the ball, in line with target, with player's (right handed) contact at left elbow.
 - Step to the ball on line to the target, stopping about one foot from the ball.
 - Player can then turn 90 degrees and be reasonably square to the target.
 - Adjust for room to take a practice swing, step up to the ball, make final adjustments , and let it fly!
- A good set up routine promotes a solid foundation and good rhythm.
(note: in the sand the practice swing can not touch the sand)



For all shots, caddy/coach should always pace three to five paces in the direction of the target, with player's (right handed) contact at left elbow.

Walk to the ball, stopping about one foot from the ball.
Turn 90 degrees
then make final adjustments for ball position and alignment



Three Ball Distance Drill

- The best way to develop an awareness for distance is to have a point of reference.
- Establishing either general (Short , medium, or long) or more specific (10 ft,30 ft, 50 ft) points of reference is a matter of skill level or personal preference.

Create a similar practice drill for chips and pitch shots, (progressively longer).



Hazards and trouble shots

- Find some difficult situations and practice the trouble shots.
- If you play golf, you will end up in some interesting places!

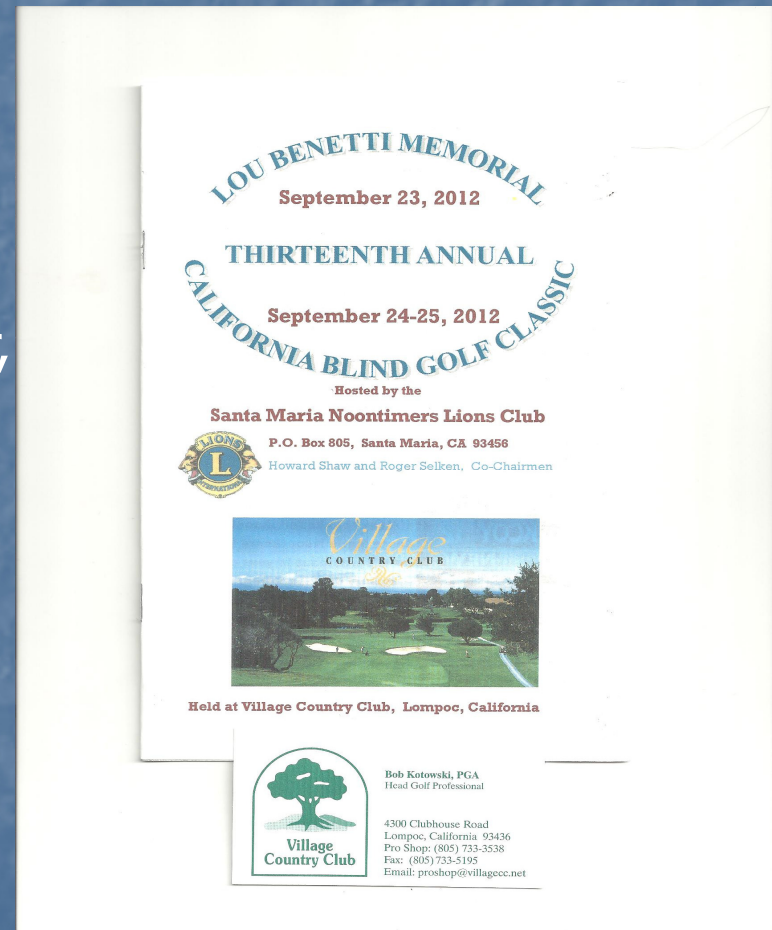
Use your imagination, and practice some shots off the beaten path.
Be prepared.



California Blind Golf Classic

- The California Blind Golf Classic gathers the finest blind and disabled players together for three days of competition, camaraderie, great weather, fun and food, every year in September.

*Special thanks to the members and Board of directors of the Village Country Club for embracing Blind Golf with open arms and wonderful hospitality!



2014

California Blind Classic Senior Champion

Howard Shaw



2010 California Blind Classic



2008 California Blind Golf Classic



2008
California Blind Golf Classic



2012
California Blind Golf Classic



2008 California Blind Golf Classic



California Blind Classic 2014

Village Country Club



2014 California Blind Classic

Participants Chip Milne, Adelaide Ortega, Bruce Peterson, Howard Shaw, Randy Shaw



Rules of Golf (amended for blind golf)

UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION RULES FOR PLAYING GOLF

RULES EXCEPTIONS SPECIFIC FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED GOLFERS

The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews Scotland has set the rules by which all golfers are expected to play. The United States Golf Association has agreed to abide by these rules.

The United States Golf Association has made modification of some of these rules in order to permit the Blind and Visually Impaired golfers to play the game competitively with their Sighted peers.

Blind and Visually Impaired Golfers are expected to abide by all rules that apply to Sighted Golfers with the following specific exceptions.

These modifications are of two general classifications: the role of Sighted Coaches in assisting the Blind and Visually Impaired Golfers; and grounding the club in a hazard.

The role of a Sighted Coach is assisting the Blind or Visually Impaired golfers prior to the stroke limited in that:

Rule 6.4 There is nothing in the rule that forbids the Coach from serving as a Caddy also. A Blind Golfer may have a Coach and a Caddy. If a Caddy is present the Coach may not touch or carry clubs except to hand the club to the Blind Golfer and position the club behind the ball.

Rule 6.4/4.5 Would disqualify the golfer if the Coach acted as a Caddy since the rule forbids a golfer from having two Caddies.

Rule 8.1 Advice . A golfer may not ask for or give advice from anyone other than his Coach or Playing Partner.

Rule 16.1f Positioning of the Coach or Partner. On the putting green the Coach may position himself behind the Blind Golfer to assess the line of the ball. He may not assist the Blind Golfer in any other way in making the stroke than positioning the club behind the ball.

Grounding the club in a hazard:

Rule 13.4b3 Providing nothing is done to test the ground or to improve the lie of the ball, a Blind or Visually Impaired Golfer may ground his club behind the ball to prevent harmful accidents.

addressed the ball and cannot be moved except to make the stroke. A one stroke penalty is assessed if the club is moved after the initial address of the ball and stance.

Master Golf Instructor and mentor Bob Toski PGA
with Blind Golf Coach Bob Kotowski PGA



Pre- shot routine

- One time, during a round, Bob asked me what the heck I was thinking about? I was hitting an iron, and I guess I stood over the shot for about 15-16 seconds. My Normal routine at the time took 12.5 seconds, from the time I committed to hit the shot, until I made contact. I was not aware of this at the time, But Mr. Toski, knowing the value of timing, rhythm, and the importance of a consistent pre- shot routine was acutely aware of my tendencies, and introduced me to another aspect of the game.
- Point being : There is a rhythm to your swing, a rhythm to your routine, and a rhythm to the round. All of these cannot be overemphasized!
- That day I became aware of how critical a good routine was to my students as well as my own game.
- In blind golf, if we are to standardize everything, and strive for peak performance, a solid routine is even more critical.

Additional Materials Are Available

A book, "Add Gas to Your Golf Game/Fuel Your Game With Your Brain" by Howard E. Shaw, is available for the benefit of beginning and blind golfers as well as those those who have acquired faulty habits that are defeating a good golf game.

- The book gives an overview of the game of golf, Grip Alignment and Swing, a description of all golf shots and clubs, tips and practices to assure a better golf game, etiquette and a vocabulary used in the game.
- The book is available on the internet from Authorhouse Publishing Company (877 820 55539) and Amazon.

Howard Shaw , Bob Kotowski PGA, Greens superintendent Scott
Walwyn and Chance

