

BOOK
EXCERPT

The joy of Office Golf

There's no reason to let anything so tedious as a job get in the way of your favorite sport

BY DAVID OWEN



offers work for one reason only: to pay for golf.

If they didn't have to cover golf-related expenses—green fees, golf shirts, cart rentals, hot dogs, cigars, new clubs, new balls, automatic presses, beer, alimony—most golfers wouldn't even bother to have Social Security numbers.

Working indoors to buy time to play outdoors is frustrating, however. Indeed, many jobs seem to have been designed for the sole purpose of keeping golfers off of golf courses. Consider:

- ▶ Most jobs take place between 9 and 5—the best hours for playing golf.
- ▶ Most time off from work is concentrated during weekends and holidays—periods when golf courses are crowded and slow.
- ▶ Most lunch breaks are limited to one hour, even though a typical round of golf requires four.

▶ Work is seldom canceled, except during blizzards, hurricanes and civil disturbances—times when playing golf is dangerous.

▶ Few employers reimburse country-club membership fees.

▶ The acreage around most office buildings is used for parking lots rather than driving ranges.

▶ Wearing a coat and tie can inhibit a free, natural swing.

In an ideal world for golfers, employment—if it existed at all—would occur only after dark, in the rain, and during

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Important memo: Take Your Putter to Work Day!

To: Staff
From: The editors of GOLF DIGEST
Re: Take Your Putter to Work Day

Forget the four majors and the Ryder Cup. The biggest golf event of the year is coming up. It's the first-ever Take Your Putter To Work Day!

On **Tuesday, Nov. 16**, all around the country and beyond, worker drones just like us will be showing up at the office as usual. But along with our briefcases, newspapers and worries, we'll be taking our putters with us, to compete in what will be the biggest indoor golf event in history.

Anyone in any office anywhere can take part. (Even if you work alone, from home—you can't lose!) It doesn't take long, doesn't require a lot of equipment and doesn't cost anything. It's a chance to bond with your colleagues. Most of all, everyone will be able to take a break from the stresses and strains of far too much work. Here's what you need to do:

1. Present the attached certificate to your boss, declaring your intention to be the official commissioner of your company's tournament (larger companies might decide to conduct departmental tournaments). If your boss is a terrific person, he or she might offer to put up a prize for the winner. Just remember that bosses are people, too—be sure to invite them to play.
2. Pin this memo to your notice board at work with a sign-up sheet. Invite everyone to play. Send an e-mail to the whole staff. Spread the word in the lunch line. Enlist colleagues as recruiters. Try to involve your HR department, if you have one.
3. Once you've finalized the field, do the pairings. Tell everyone where they need to be and when. Tell them to bring a putter if they've got one, but not to worry if they don't (you can share). Make photocopies of the scorecard on the back of the attached certificate and give one to each player.
4. Prepare the course. (You might want to do this right before the tournament to avoid sneak practice rounds—local knowledge is everything in Office Golf.) The layout can be simple or ambitious. We recommend nine "holes" that can be played with just a putter (a course requiring lob shots over potted plants and photocopy machines is fine, so long as you agree to pay for damages). Mark the "tees" with a piece of paper taped to the floor. Each "cup" can be as simple as a coffee mug strategically placed on the carpet.
5. Be prepared for rules incidents. We recommend no unplayable lies—if your ball comes to rest next to the water cooler, take one putterhead relief.
6. Play away!

For more information on setting up an Office Golf tournament, visit www.golfdigest.com. To submit your company name to GOLF DIGEST's official list of those participating in the Take Your Putter To Work Day, please send us your name, title, phone number, company name and address by Wednesday, Nov. 10. And when it's all over and the crowds have gone home, tell us all about your event. Was it an unqualified success? Did anyone get fired? We'd love to hear a report on the highlights, and we'll publish the best one(s) we receive. Send the name and address of your company, the name of the winner, winning score, photos and a 50-word summary, to:

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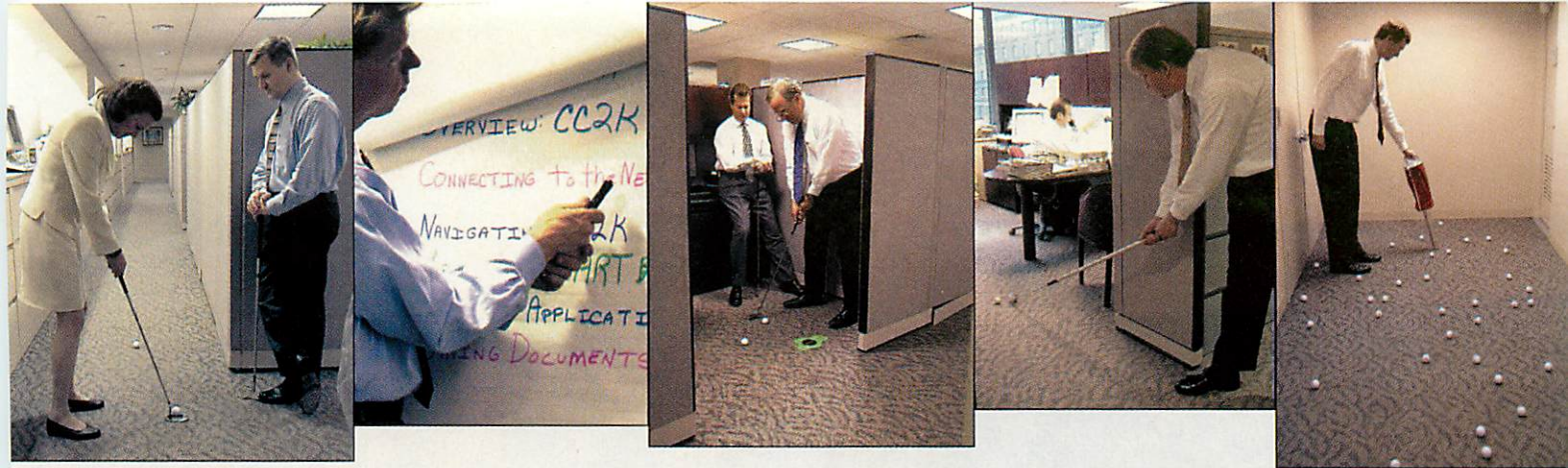
frost delays. Workweeks would be staggered, to ensure an equitable distribution of tee times. All jobs that depend on good weather—such as roadside trash removal and the collection of cow manure—would be reserved for tennis players.

Sadly, society's antipathy to working golfers doesn't end when the workday is over. A married player who is forced by the unfairness of his work schedule to arrange a game with three friends in Florida on Christmas morning is likely to be treated as a pariah by his nonplaying wife and children. A young mother who leaves her infant in the care of a teenage bag-room attendant so that she can squeeze in 18 holes after work is almost certain to be derided by parents who don't play.

Is it any wonder, then, that most workers today have trouble finding time for more than two or three rounds a week?

Re-imagining work

The anti-golf bias of our economy affects more than just golfers. Golf-deprived employees are less productive. They may show up at their desks in the morning, but their hearts aren't in their jobs. If their employer asks them a work-related question while they are thinking about the proper angle of the left wrist at the top of the backswing, they may answer, "Huh?" On warm spring days, they are far more likely than nonplaying workers to become entangled in machinery. If an important golf tournament is being broadcast on television during a meeting, they may appear agitated and confused. They often break into tears without provocation. They are sometimes snippy on the phone.



In an ideal society, those golfers who needed to work would be allowed to earn their living by playing golf. The professional golf tours would not be limited to a handful of players with grotesquely high levels of ability. The television networks would not refuse to broadcast rounds played by slicers, hackers, choppers, dubbers, and others whose physical limitations, bad swings, twitchy putting strokes and poor mental outlook preclude the shooting of low scores. Major golf-equipment manufacturers would not decline to offer lucrative endorsement deals to overweight, middle-age players who occasionally miss the ball altogether. Golfers would not be forced to spend their very best playing years stuck in dreary, golf-free occupations.

Well, our society is far from ideal, and it probably always will be. But there is hope.

As growing numbers of employed players have discovered, golf doesn't have to be forced into remission when the sun goes down on Sunday evening. Golfers don't need to sublimate their defining obsession solely because their loved ones need to eat.

That's right: Golf can be played at work. Hours that used to be wasted in such frustrating nongolf activities as planning, managing, manufacturing, shipping, receiving, marketing, meeting, buying, selling, accounting, hiring and being fired can now be put to a fully productive use.

That productive use is Office Golf.

What is Office Golf?

Office Golf is any form of golf that can be played indoors on someone else's time. It's pitching over the conference-room table. It's putting from the corner behind the door of your office to the

front right-hand leg of the little table next to your desk. It's chipping down the flight of stairs that connects the executive suite with the sales department. It's competing head-to-head on a challenging course laid out between the reception desk and the photocopier.

Office Golfers are people just like you and me:

- ▶ Advertising account executives who putt balls into overturned coffee cups.
- ▶ CEOs who practice bunker shots in sand traps built right into the floors of their executive suites.
- ▶ Accountants who lob balls over piles of unfiled tax returns.
- ▶ Investment bankers who play thousand-dollar nassaus during breaks between initial public offerings.
- ▶ Lawyers who negotiate divorce settlements while putting on conference tables.
- ▶ Sales reps who play double or quits while big deals hang in the balance.
- ▶ Secretaries who use pitching wedges to chip crumpled drafts into the trash.
- ▶ Librarians who hit tee shots *very quietly* between the stacks in the reference room.
- ▶ Everyone who has ever swung, stroked, chipped, pitched, lobbed, putt-ed or cheated while at work.

Most new Office Golfers initially think of the game as nothing but a make-do substitute for grass golf—as golf methadone. But these players quickly realize that Office Golf is intensely satisfying and addictive in its own right, especially if it's played in offices that have high ceilings, fast carpets, and not many priceless vases. Office Golf, they quickly learn, is every bit as demanding, unfair, and cruelly arbitrary as grass golf, making it worthy of full-blown obsession.

No other on-site work substitute offers such unlimited opportunities for delightfully compulsive behavior. And best of all, Office Golfers, unlike all but the most talented grass golfers, are paid while they play.

A different game

Office Golf will never replace grass golf. No foursome of fanatics will ever embark on a pilgrimage to the town of St. Andrews for the purpose of hitting 2-irons down the corridors of the Bank of Scotland. But the two games should never be viewed as competing or incompatible activities. They are merely two different—and equally beguiling—faces of the eternal Oneness of Golf, the yin and yang of any employed golfer's existence.

Office Golf and grass golf are also entirely complementary: Skills honed on Bermuda grass can be applied on level-loop pile, and vice versa. A player who can use a lob wedge to pick a ball cleanly off the floor of the men's room will also be dangerous around the greens in any tournament played on grass.

In addition, Office Golf offers complex satisfactions that are simply unavailable in grass golf. No grass golfer ever had to judge the precise geometry of a ceiling-and-two-wall carom, chip past a closing elevator door, or play a delicate explosion shot from the shards of a broken conference-room window. In the course of a single workday, a typical Office Golfer will face half a dozen uniquely challenging shots that even a skilled grass golfer might not encounter in a lifetime of serious play.

And on top of it all, Office Golf can make a job seem almost like something you wouldn't mind doing for a living. 🏌️‍♂️