

Welcome to SONC Fall Tournament golf competition. This guide highlights reminders about competition and rules that will be applied during match play.

Competition Manager: Matt Spear

- If you are on the course and have a rules question or witness an infraction by another athlete, caddie or Unified partner contact a rules official. If a rules official is not present at the next hole you may text the following to (704) 301-0524.
 - Name
 - Role (athlete, Unified partner, caddie, coach)
 - Hole you are on
 - Question or infraction witnessed

Competition Reminders

Competitions will run according to the [Special Olympics Inc. official rules](#) and the [SONC golf modifications](#). Certified coaches, caddies and Unified partners should have knowledge of and be familiar with both of these documents. There is an app for the United States Golf Association (USGA) rulebook! Simply go to the app store on your phone and download the free USGA rulebook app.

Please remember caddies and partners are **keeping score for another athlete/partner in their pairing**. In groups of three, make sure everyone knows who is keeping track for who when you get to the first tee. Please see rules officials before proceeding so that any disagreements can be sent over radio to competition staff for a ruling.

At the end of the round, the entire group must report directly to the scoring tent. Verify scores with all athletes and Unified partners before signing off on the scorecard.

Rule Reminders

- **Male golfers (athletes and partners) tee off from the grey tees, female golfers (athletes and partners) tee off from the red tees.**
 - In level 2 Unified alternate shot, **either** the athlete or Unified partner can tee off on the first hole. You must alternate who tees off each hole.
- There are water hazards beside and behind several greens, and one lateral hazard next to a fairway. Water hazard margin lines will be painted as appropriate.
- Hole 14 requires an 85 yard carry over a pond from the tee box to an elevated green. There will be a drop box provided on the far side of the pond.
- If there is not a rules official at your hole, hit a provisional ball and make sure it is noted appropriately on the scorecard and speak to a rules official at the next hole.
 - You may also text a request for a ruling to the competition manager. See contact information above.

- Extensive coaching, conversations, practice swings, or anything else that delays the pace of play are subject to penalty strokes. Keep competition moving by quickly assessing the lie of the ball, line up, and shot.
- Rules regarding **slow play** will be emphasized to ensure all participants have enough time to complete their round. Penalties for slow play will be as follows: **1st offense (warning), 2nd offense (1-stroke penalty), 3rd + offense (2-stroke penalty)**.¹

2019 USGA Rules Updates

The United States Golf Association (USGA) has many [updates to its rules for 2019](#). The following is a summary of the most important rule changes:

- Golfers will only be allowed **three minutes** to search for a strayed golf ball (previous time was five minutes).
- **Golfers should take no more than 40 seconds for a shot**. This is to encourage **ready golf**. Please note above for the stroke penalties for slow play.
- Once a golfer approaches the ball, **no person** (e.g. caddie or Unified partner) is allowed to stand on or near the extended line of the ball behind the golfer.
- Dropping Procedure: When taking relief, golfers should now drop from knee height (no longer shoulder height)
- Measuring relief: Golfers may take relief using the longest club in their bag (except the putter). The standard one or two club lengths remains the way by which relief is measured.
- Double-hitting a shot: There will no longer be a penalty for double-hitting a shot. Golfers will simply count the single stroke they took to strike the ball, rather than counting two shots for hitting the ball twice.
- Out of bounds: **No more walking back to the tee!** Golfers can drop a new ball in the vicinity of where their ball has gone out of bounds with a two-stroke penalty.
- Moving the ball: No penalty to a golfer for accidental movement of a ball on the putting green or while looking for it in the rough. A player is responsible for a moved ball if it is “virtually certain” that they did.
- The flag stick: It no longer has to be attended or removed when putting and there will be no penalty if a golfer hits an unattended flagstick in the hole.
- Golfers will be allowed to repair spike marks as well as other damage on the putting green. There is also no penalty for merely touching the line of a putt.
- Golfers can now touch the ground with their club in a hazard and can move loose impediments in a hazard without penalty. Golfers can also move loose impediments in bunkers and will not be penalized for generally grounding their club away from their ball. Please note that a golfer **cannot** ground their club when playing a bunker shot. An unplayable lie may be taken in a bunker, with a drop out for two strokes.

¹ SONC modification of USGA Rule 6-7