

Chicago Tribune

Singles golf isn't all for the scoring

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Published September 28, 2003

Some men may be slower at golf than women, which is just the opposite of what is an apparent assumption of the sport.

The notion is that because women don't hit the ball as hard or as long as guys do and because they tend to socialize a bit more instead of concentrating on just playing, they lag behind. Taking that notion a step further, it can be assumed that guys tolerate playing with women simply because they want to be near them.

But assumptions can be misleading.

"Guys that I play with play just as slow as the women. It just depends on the person," said Pam Baldwin, 50, at Heritage Bluffs, a public golf course in Channahon in southwestern Will County.

You would have seen evidence against the slow-women/sneaky-guys conceit last weekend at the course, where the Chicago chapter of the American Singles Golf Association held its last golf outing of the season.

Baldwin and about 40 fellow members of the 200-member organization were paired up, many of them boy-girl couples, and sent out in foursomes enjoying each other's company while smacking the ball around.

The event was free of guys on the make suffering women who held up the proceedings, partly because a lot of these people are already really good friends from years of similar meets and greets and because an argument could be made that some guys are actually the ones who take too much time between shots.

"I play really fast. It's just, choose a club and go," said E.J. Tolle, 37. She claimed that her husband, Mark, is the procrastinator in the marriage. By the way, they met through singles golf.

However, "I don't play as slow as a lot of men do," chimed in Mark Tolle, 49, who lives with his bride in Chicago.

"I've played with a lot of women and a lot of men," he said, "and there are a lot of women who do play fast. They don't analyze as much as men do, and men can overanalyze and take a lot more time when they want to hit a shot."

Several members of the golfing group, both men and women, noted that guys like to inspect their golf club, check the wind conditions, calculate to the inch how far they have to hit a ball, spend an inordinate amount of time looking for their lost balls in the woods, whatever--whereas women just step up and pound the thing.

"Even though we are a social golf group, we do want to keep the ball moving," insisted chapter Chairman Gabow Gannon.

Aside from the apparent myth that women are slow players, what also is agreed upon is that if guys are looking to meet women, there's no better place than on the golf course. Mark and E.J. Tolle met through the association, dated for 14 months and were married last month.

"You spend four or five hours in a cart with somebody, riding along with them all day long, and it's just a great way to make conversation," said Fred Dreger, 51, the organization's communications chairman, who has been dating Gannon since February.

The national association has been around for 10 years; the Chicago chapter is in its fifth year, with events year round.

"In the beginning, we were a social group that golfed," said Randy Schutz, the group's social chairman. "Now we're a golf group that has socials."

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