

Course rating is all about correct timing

BY KEVIN JONES

To start things off, my name is Kevin Jones and I am the new Assistant Executive Director and Director of Handicapping and Course Rating for the Louisiana Golf Association. As you probably already know, former Assistant Executive Director Michael Walder accepted a new position with the Virginia State Golf Association and I have happily taken his place. I originate from the Pacific Northwest, growing up just outside Portland, Ore., and moving here from Tacoma, Washington. To say the least, things are certainly different down here and my wife and I are adjusting as



Kevin Jones

quickly as possible. Especially the weather, where nobody in Washington or Oregon understands what humidity really is. To clarify one question I always get about the Pacific Northwest. Yes, it does rain a lot, but only in frequency, not in the amount of rainfall. Louisiana actually averages more rain than does Washington, because the intensity of the rainfall is far greater here than in Washington.

My background in golf comes from playing competitively as a junior in Oregon. I fell in love with the game at a young age and during college was given the opportunity of a lifetime to intern for the Oregon Golf Association, working primarily with Junior Golf. After completing two summer internships with the OGA, I was hooked and knew this was the career for me.

I knew I had a deeper love for the game beyond playing it and being a golf administrator was the best way to give back to the game while also having a career with it. I stayed patient, knowing positions in golf administration across the country were hard to find.

I spent the last two years working at Boeing before finally landing this opportunity with the LGA. I am very excited to be here and look forward to the opportunities and challenges in helping this association grow and foster amateur golf.

As previously stated, my primary responsibilities are handicapping and course rating. For everyone out there, individuals and clubs alike, who need help with our handicapping computers, please give me a call and I will help you in any way I can to make sure everyone knows how to run the system and utilize its great features. The integrity of handicapping is preserved and enhanced through players always entering their scores after a round and that can be difficult if you do not know how to work the computer. It's

a great system and I encourage everyone to use it often.

Switching gears a bit, I would like to take a minute to briefly explain course and slope rating and hopefully create an understanding of how the process works. In the three months that I have been here, I have received many verbal requests and comments from members stating that their course needs to be rated again because many things have changed or it's been a long time since it was last done. I think the problem lies with what the members perceive is a long time and what the USGA thinks is adequate. Here are the guidelines that the USGA sets forth for state and regional golf associations to use when deciding when it's time to re-rate a golf course: a course should be rated every three years in its initial nine years of existence. After nine years, a course should be re-rated every 10 years.

The one exception to these guidelines is if the course has had major renovations done. When I say major renovations, I don't mean a couple of trees were planted on a few holes.

Major renovations would include new tees, re-routing holes, restructuring greens, or the creation or demolition of hazards. The most important thing to remember is that it takes a lot of changes to actually increase or decrease a course rating. If a new tree is planted in the middle of a fairway on a hole, the assumption is that the course and/or slope rating would change dramatically. In reality, it might only change a small fraction because the whole course must be taken into account.

The LGA has records of all course and slope ratings done in the state as we are the only association in the state licensed by the USGA to do course and slope ratings. We actively track when a course is due for their next rate and will review the legitimacy of all requests within the guidelines set by the USGA. We understand that there might be a perception that rates change all the time, but actually your course and slope rating will stay true, in most cases, for years and years.

If you have any questions about course and slope rating or are interested in becoming a volunteer for the LGA in course rating or our championship events, give me a call or send me an email to kjones@lgagolf.org. I would be more than happy to explain the process more so that the public is better educated about course rating. Once again, I am happy to be here, eating crawfish and learning to say "y'all".

See you next month..."Inside the Ropes"

Kevin Jones is the Assistant Executive Director of the Louisiana Golf Association. He can be reached by phone (337.265.3938) or e-mail (kjones@lgagolf.org).

