

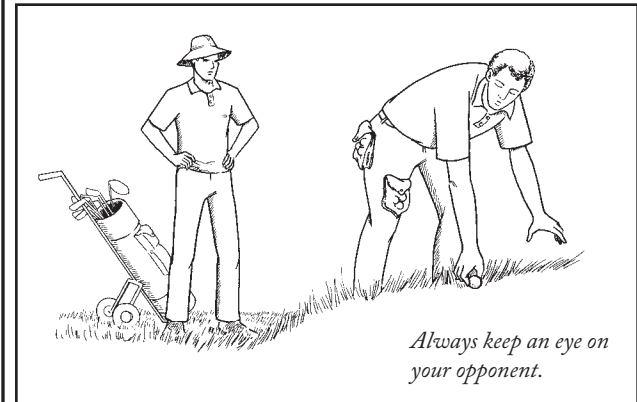
## WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

# HOW TO THWART A CHEAT

Cheating at golf is so pervasive it seems to be part of the game: even people playing alone do it. There are mulligans off the tee, gimmies on the green, and lots of ways to get an unfair advantage in between. Here are a few of the most common scams and how to recognize and defeat them.

## THE LOST BALL ROUTINE

While searching for a ball lost in the woods, the player drops another ball that he has been carrying and falsely announces to the group that he has found his original ball. He has saved himself a penalty stroke and has positioned the ball as he pleases. A variation on this play is to find a stray ball, claim it, hit it, and move on quickly.



- 1** **Make a mental note of the markings on your opponent's ball at the start of the round.**  
Notice color, scratches, brand, and number.
- 2** **Always help to look for a missing ball, and keep an eye on your opponent as well.**  
Two people searching also speeds up play.

### IMPROVING A LIE

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The cheat gently taps her ball with a foot or the club, gaining a more favorable position.

- 1** **Stand near your opponent so that you can see the ball at all times.**
- 2** **Always watch your opponent, and, more important, let her know that she is being watched at all times.**  
Subtle comments about her technique, her attire, or the nuances of her address will let her know she's being carefully observed. You do not have to stand by her side all day long, but put yourself in a position where you can see any errant moves. Being under constant surveillance makes most people less inclined to bend the rules.
- 3** **Note how much of the ball is visible as you approach it, and mark its position in relation to nearby objects, such as roads, trees, and traps.**  
As the cheat goes to take the shot, the amount of the ball that is visible to you, even at a distance, should not change. Watch also for substantial changes in the ball's location; some players do not stop at simply tapping the ball to improve the lie.

### REPORTING FEWER STROKES

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On a hole on which everything went wrong, she drops a few strokes from the score before announcing or recording it. She realizes that most opponents will lose track at around eight or nine strokes, and may not question such a total for fear of embarrassing themselves or the player.

- 1** **Keep score carefully yourself.**  
See "How to Keep Score without a Pencil" on page 69.
- 2** **Ask for a careful account of each stroke after every hole.**  
Be supportive of your golfing companion. When she has a difficult hole, tell her to hang in there, that it happens to the best, and so on—but when the hole is complete, ask her to recap the hole in a friendly, sympathetic manner.

### PLAYING DUMB

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Though he has hit his ball out of bounds, into the water, or in any other situation where penalty strokes are applicable, he tries to take only one penalty stroke where two are warranted.

- 1** **At the completion of the hole, ask for a clear account of the score and applicable penalty strokes.**

**2 If there is any debate, be courteous, but firm.**

If the scoring remains unresolved, take it up with the club pro at the end of the round.

## FAKE HANDICAP

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Someone who has a five handicap introduces himself to a group of strangers and announces a higher handicap. After shooting a 78, he claims that it was the round of his life, and is somewhat sheepish about taking everyone's money.

**1 Take out your own USGA handicap card as you are having the discussion about handicaps.**

Tell the stranger that you have all agreed to show each other your cards before starting.

**2 At the end of nine holes, assess where this individual stands.**

If it is clear that things are not what they appear, demand an adjustment in his stated handicap. If he balks, play the back nine, but state that the competition or bet is off. If someone you just met dumps the front nine, scoring above his alleged handicap, be cautious about increasing ("pressing") a bet on the back nine. It could be a setup.

## Be Aware

- Keeping an opponent honest requires you to be observant and to hold everyone accountable for his or her strokes as the round unfolds. This may seem

tedious at times, and may cause some odd interactions with your opponents. You must decide what is more important to you: interpersonal relations or winning.

- Cheating can occur even when there is no betting or competition between players. A player seeking to claim a new course record or his own personal best score can seek to shave strokes from the scorecard. You can decide how involved you want to be.