

What's the game today?

For a variety of reasons, the choice should be match play or stroke play, but not both

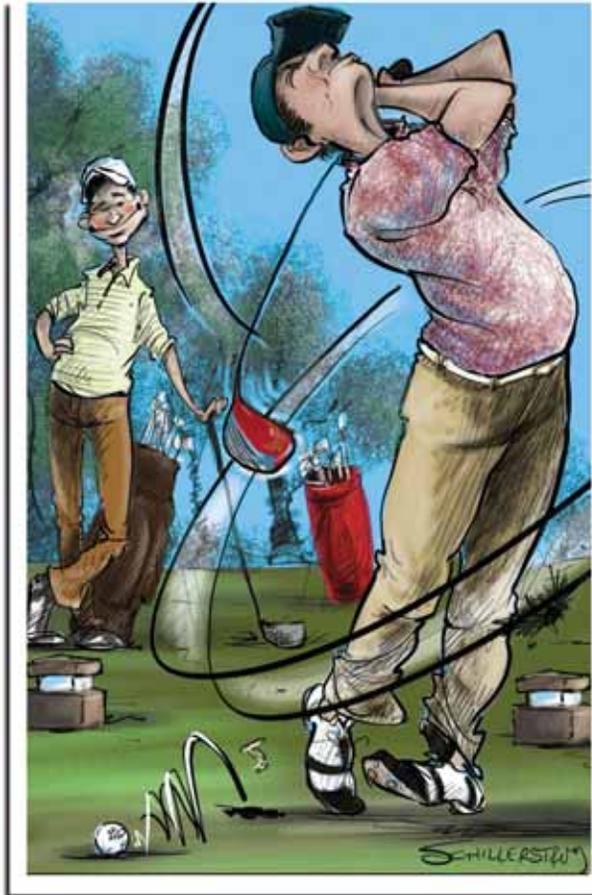
In an attempt to keep things fun and interesting, those who organize golf leagues, outings or the friendly Saturday morning round with friends often attempt to combine match play and stroke play formats. A lot of players probably can remember receiving directions along the lines of, "Play your match but keep a card for the stroke-play competition."

Such attempts should be nipped in the bud before anyone ever gets to the first tee.

As Rule 33-1 says, "Certain specific Rules governing stroke play are so substantially different from those governing match play that combining the two forms of play is not practicable and is not permitted." What are those substantial differences?

First, the scoring for the two forms of play are very different, as are the general penalties for the breach of a Rule. A match consists of one side playing against another side; no other player is involved. In match play the game is played by holes and a hole is won by the side that holes its ball in the fewest strokes. If a player breaches a Rule in match play, the general penalty is a loss of hole; that player is done and simply goes to the next tee.

A stroke-play competition consists of players completing each hole of a stipulated round or rounds and, for each round, returning a scorecard on which there is a gross score for each hole. Each person is playing against every other competitor in the competition. In stroke play, if a competitor breaches a Rule, the general penalty is



two strokes, but he has to keep playing and must hole out.

An irresolvable conflict between the forms of play could occur even before the players leave the first tee.

If a player in match play starts play of the hole from outside the teeing ground, the opponent may let that stroke stand or the opponent may recall it (Rule 11-4a). But in stroke play, if a competitor, when starting a hole, plays a ball from outside the teeing ground, he incurs a penalty of two strokes and must start play of the hole from within the teeing ground (Rule 11-4b).

There are other incidents in match play where a player is given the opportunity to recall an opponent's stroke. If

a player plays out of order in match play, the opponent may let the stroke stand or it may be recalled by the opponent (Rule 10-1c). But in stroke play, there is no provision to recall the stroke and no penalty unless the competitors agreed to play out of order to give one of them an advantage (Rule 10-2c). If a competitor in stroke play did replay a stroke made out of order, he would be proceeding under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 27-1a).

When a player's ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by an opponent in match play, the player may continue play from where the ball came to rest after the deflection or cancel the stroke and play a ball, without penalty, as near as possible at the spot from which the original

ball was last played. But in stroke play, if a ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by a fellow competitor, no penalty is incurred by anyone and the ball must be played from where it came to rest after the deflection. There is no way to resolve this difference if trying to combine the two forms of play.

A unique feature in match play is the opportunity to concede a stroke, hole or the entire match. In stroke play, a player is disqualified if he fails to hole out and does not correct the mistake.

Thus, the differences between match play and stroke play are substantial. The game is either match play or stroke play; you cannot play both at the same time. 🏌️