

# Rule Tip of the Week Introducing the "Groupier"

The purpose of this article is to suggest some new golf terminology, i.e., the "groupier" otherwise known as the "stickman." These two terms are derived from the game of craps which uses similar terms. A "croupier" or dealer is someone appointed by the casino to assist in the playing of the game, especially in the distribution of bets and payouts. The "stickman" is the casino staff member who calls out the dice rolls, returns the dice to the shooter, and places and pays out the proposition bets.

So, why propose this new golf terminology? Well, consider new Rule 13.2a [Leaving Flagstick in the Hole] which was enacted by the USGA for the purpose of speeding up play. This Rule reads, in part:

- (1) **Player May Leave Flagstick in Hole.** The player may make a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole, so that it is possible for the ball in motion to hit the flagstick.

The player must decide this before making the stroke, by either:

- Leaving the flagstick where it is in the hole or moving it so that it is centred in the hole and leaving it there, or
- Having a removed flagstick put back in the hole.

This Rule certainly helps to speed up play when everyone in the group wants to keep the flagstick in the hole. However, the speed of play will slow down if your group has a mixture of players, some who want to keep the flagstick in the hole and others who want to have the flagstick removed from the hole!

For example, imagine a group of four players: Adam, Bill, Cheryl and Donna, all of whom are on the putting green outside of 15 feet and they will be putting in that order. Adam wants the flagstick removed from the hole, so Donna walks over and removes the flagstick and sets it aside. After Adam taps in, Bill says that he wants the flagstick in the hole, so Adam retrieves the flagstick and puts it back in the hole. After Bill putts out, Cheryl says she wants the flagstick removed from the hole, so Bill removes the flagstick and sets it aside. After a poor putt, Cheryl decides to mark and lift her ball, rather than putt out. Guess what? Donna wants the flagstick replaced in the hole, so once again, Adam retrieves the flagstick and puts it back in the hole. After Donna putts out with the flagstick in the hole, Cheryl says she wants the flagstick removed. Are we having fun yet?

Here's the simple solution for this merry-go-round-like scenario: the first person who holes out becomes the designated "groupier" or "stickman" to assist the group for the remainder of the hole. The duty of the groupier/stickperson is to remove or replace the flagstick when called upon by the next person to putt. Unless otherwise directed by the next player to putt, the groupier/ stickperson is not attending the flagstick. Therefore, the groupier/ stickperson needs to make sure that he or she is not standing right next to the hole when the stroke is made.

In the adjacent photographs, you can see the effectiveness of the designated groupier/stickman. In the first photograph, the groupier/stickman, having just completed play of the hole, is holding the flagstick behind his back while the player to the left, who does not want the flagstick in the hole, is preparing to putt. In the second photograph, the groupier/ stickman has already replaced the flagstick at the direction of the third player so that the third player can putt almost immediately!

