Why is that guy taking my clubs?

Today, carts have replaced caddies at most courses. But if you do happen onto a course where there's a caddie standing ready to hoist your golf bag for you... *let him!* If you're an inexperienced golfer, don't assume that caddies are only for low handicappers. If a caddie's services are offered, accept. You'll get to enjoy golf the way it was meant to be played - walking the course, appreciating the camaraderie of your fellow golfers and enjoying the chance to get to know your caddie.

On the chance that you do employ a caddie from time to time, here are a few pointers on tipping and other niceties:

- Check with your host or the caddie master regarding how (and how much) the caddie is compensated.

- If someone is hosting your group, the caddie's tips may be billed to the host's account or the host may choose to take care of the tips himself. Either way, always offer to cover your caddie's tip either by giving it directly to the caddie or by reimbursing your host. Tips are paid in cash and range from $20 - $50 per bag, so come prepared having an appropriate amount of cash in hand when you arrive at the course.

- Always introduce yourself to your caddie, maybe even let him know a little about yourself. Set the tone for your relationship by asking your caddie about each shot as you approach the ball: What does he estimate the distance to the hole is? Are there any obstacles you can't see? What club would he advise using? What would be a good point to aim at?

- At the turn (usually, after nine holes, the course either returns you to clubhouse or deposits you at a halfway shack), be sure to ask if your caddie would like a refreshment, such as a bottled water or a soda.

- When you complete your round, give your caddie his tip and thank him for his help.

For more golfing etiquette, see Peter Post's book, *Playing Through.*