

Repair Your Ball Marks on the Green

Of the specific course-related behaviors cited by Post Golf Survey respondents, one faux pas stands out above all others: failing to repair ball marks on the green. What makes this failure so tragic is if a ball mark is repaired immediately after it's made, the spot quickly grows back into a smooth, unscarred stretch of grass. A ball mark left unrepaired, however, is an unfixable blemish that will remain visible for weeks. Even worse, these ball marks aren't found just on the periphery of the green. They often occur near the flagstick, where they can potentially affect the putting of every golfer playing that hole. *Repair marks off the green, too!*



How to Repair a Ball Mark

Most clubs have ball-mark repair tools that they either give out as freebies or sell for a nominal fee. Carry one in in your golf bag with your spare tees, ball markers, and golf glove, if you use one. To repair a ball mark:

- Insert the tool just outside the edge of the mark. Never push the tool into the mark itself.
- Press the handle of the tool forward toward the center of the mark. Repeat two or three times, moving around the mark. Tamp the mark gently with the sole of your putter to reestablish a smooth surface.

Do not insert the tool and then pull the handle away from the mark, causing the tip of the tool to lift the mark. While this may seem like an easy way to raise the indentation made by the mark, by lifting the ground you tear the roots of the grass and kill it, leaving a blemish that will take weeks to heal.

Fixing Divots

Let me make a quick public plea to golfers everywhere: *Fill in your divots- please!* Golf is hard enough to play without having to worry about hitting your ball out of someone else's divot. There's an inherent unfairness to hitting a great tee shot down the middle of the fairway, only to find your ball half-buried in a divot: a great shot, penalized unfairly. A number of golfers have

even suggested that rule be passed allowing them to remove their ball from a divot if it should happen to land in one. So far, the USGA has not acquiesced to their wish.

How to Repair a Divot

If you're new to a course, check with the starter or with the golfers you're playing with regarding the best way to fix divots at that course. There are two basic options:

- Some courses place containers of sand mix on all golf carts and pull carts. If the course you're playing on provides a mix, simply fill the divot with the mix, then smooth the fill so it's level with the grass.

- If no mix is available, retrieve the chunk of grass that came out of your divot, replace it inside the divot, and tamp down the chunk with your foot. If the displaced grass has broken into several chunks, try your best to place them in the divot in a way that leaves a smooth grass surface.

Remember that regardless of the method used, the key is to check on the correct procedure for the course you're playing, and then follow it.