

Multiday Club Championships Template for Golf Clubs



Rationale and Preamble

The Australian Human Rights Commission's Guidelines for the Promotion of Equal Opportunity for Women and Girls in Golf (2019) address a clear gap in the guidance Golf Australia has been able to make available to clubs on significant issues that relate to equal opportunity for women and girls in golf.

These Guidelines acknowledge that there has been historical gender discrimination in golf that has limited women's access to the game in different ways, including women's access to weekend play. A remnant of such historical discrimination is that many women still play only during the week or only have memberships that do not give them Saturday playing rights. As such, in many clubs, women's Honour Board competitions are traditionally scheduled midweek to accommodate the women in this situation, and who make up the majority of women in some golf clubs.

The challenge here is that women who are seven day members and can only play on weekends due to work or education responsibilities cannot participate in these significant club events, whilst men in the same position can play their Honour Board competitions on weekends. Offering the opportunity to compete in an Honour Board competition for men on a weekend but not for women may expose a club to gender discrimination litigation.

In addition, Golf Australia has implemented a Women and Girls Engagement Strategy that is designed to engage women and girls in golf and reverse their declining participation. The goal is to 'transform the sport of golf into one that is highly engaging, accessible, and fully inclusive for women and girls'. Golf Australia acknowledges that not providing women with weekend Honour Board competition access as per their male clubmates does not ensure that golf is accessible and fully inclusive for all women, namely those who work or study full time during the week.

The aim is to 'empower clubs and facilities around Australia to be more welcoming, inclusive and accessible for women and girls'. To empower and support clubs who wish to lead by being fully inclusive and accessible, Golf Australia has developed the following Multiday Club Championship template. It aims to empower, equip and support golf clubs to be able to both honour the historical midweek traditions around such competitions whilst simultaneously future proofing golf so that any woman, working and non-working, can find their place in the game, feel inspired to participate, are welcomed and nurtured throughout, and empowered to achieve their goals.

Suggested Multiday Club Championship Format

Club & Championship philosophy and focus:

- Celebration of players' development
- Strong and reputable standard of competition through a wide and deep field
- Inclusion of as many women as possible to facilitate a wide and deep field
- Importance of participation and encouragement of women to be involved

Event duration: Multiple weeks

Format: Stroke play

- Removing match play rounds gives clubs flexibility to conduct their club championship rounds across multiple days.
- Although a mix of stroke qualifying rounds using the multi day concept can be followed by match play held on weekends.

Days of play: 1*midweek (women's day of play), 1*weekend (mixed sex rounds) – per Club Championship round

Day order: Clubs can start the round either midweek or weekend. As an example:

- Round 1: Saturday or Sunday (part 1), midweek (part 2)
- Round 2: Saturday or Sunday (part 1), midweek (part 2)
- Round 3: All together on a Saturday or Sunday

Player experience: The rationale behind bringing all women together for the final round is to support player experience. Offering an opportunity to celebrate all club champions together can on a weekend further promotes an inclusive environment and celebrates the champions across the entire club. Consideration should be given for 5- and 6-day women members to play on the final weekend round, a special measure should be considered as a way of supporting this outcome of increasing women's participation within the championships on a weekend.

Presentations: end of final day

Pin positions: Position the pin on the first day of play and then leave it or reposition it in the same or a position of similar difficulty until the second part of the round is played

Nomination of day of play: Players are to nominate which days they will play their rounds prior to the start of the competition.

Rationale for Multiday Club Championship Format

Economic:

- More access to competitions for women who work will increase value for membership fees.
- More competitors will increase the revenue generated by competition fees, and pre/post round spend at the club.

Membership Impact:

- More access to honour board competitions for women who work may create greater demand for club membership compared to clubs that do not offer such access.
- Women who pay seven-day membership fees have full access to the club events, increasing the perceived value for money of being a club member.

Prize distribution:

- An increased competition fee revenue through an increase in competitors will facilitate the opportunity to increase prizes/prize pool.

Club Brand/Reputation, Public Relations & Recruitment:

- A multiday club championship model can create a perception that the club is inclusive of women of all life stages, experiences, and ages (working women, school aged girls, university students, retired women).
- Promotion of an inclusive philosophy can be an advantage with the club's recruitment strategy.

Legal:

- This format could facilitate compliance with the Federal Sex Discrimination Act (1984) which requires both men and women equal access to competition formats. E.g.: if men who are seven-day members have access to club championships on Saturday's women also need to have access on weekends.

Values:

- If golf clubs value participation, inclusion, and diversity, then a multiday club championship for women and girls would be consistent with that.

Historical:

- Running a multiday club championship for women, rather than migrate the existing event to the weekend, honours the traditions and female membership base that have grown out of historical gendered structures within golf clubs where women could only play during the week.
- Conducting multiday club championships also ensures women who are not 6- or 7-day members can participate, this is dependent on individual club-based eligibility criteria.

Wellbeing:

- Sporting clubs are a powerful and important place to facilitate connection between people in the community and often a sense of belonging and purpose.
- There is a steady increase in the experience of loneliness in the general community, which has a significant impact on their mental wellbeing.

- Sporting clubs, such as golf clubs, have a powerful platform to help people feel connected and a sense of belonging, which can help them to maintain healthy mental wellbeing.
- Multiday club championships maximise and promote the inclusion of all women and girls, rather than the exclusion of those who work or study during the week, and therefore have the ability to impact women and girls' sense of connection and belonging through their golf club.

Social:

- Facilitating more opportunities for more women to participate in the club championship may increase the social interactions of members at the club.

Golf Club Sustainability:

- Golf clubs' sustainability is dependent upon retention of existing and continuing to increase club membership.
- Pre Covid female golf club membership was in greater decline than male membership.
- Just under 20% of clubs' members are female in Australia.
- The average age of female club member is 63 years, which is 8 years older than their male counterparts, and this average age is increasing.
- Women working full time is commonplace and they are doing so more often than at any time in Australia's history. In addition, the retirement age continues to increase. As such, fewer women will be able to play midweek.
- Adopting a multiday club championship will ensure that we can cater for women's historical participation patterns and simultaneously prepare clubs to accommodate for a future female membership.
- Accommodating participation strategies that future proof our clubs will ensure that they can attract and retain new women and girls as members because what they are offered suits their work and study lives.

Competition

- Increasing the number of women and girls in the club championship field will build a wider and deeper competition field, ensuring that your club championship standard is known for being strong and reputable.
- The club champion will be a genuine club member because they have competed against all club members, rather than only those who play midweek.
- Our club championships events are of an amateur status and should be inclusive of all golfers.

Differences in Playing Conditions Between Days:

- Golf accepts that differences in playing and weather conditions can occur within a single day of play and affect competitors' results depending on when they play their round throughout the day.
- Accepting that we might have differences in playing conditions between days is consistent with this philosophy.