

Let's Play Golf

By Betsey Mitchell

It's that time of year again when I drag out the soap box to preach to the ladies who love the game, play pretty good, and keep missing out on all the fun of golf on the road.

Let's take championship and tournament and competition out of the discussion for now. You can't convince me that there is any difference between playing in your regular league game and something like the Moore County Women's Amateur.

Here's the refresher course for those who haven't heard this speech. This is how tournaments work. You drive to the course and start at the bag drop. You put on your golf shoes, maybe go to the range and hit a few putts to warm up. Does any of this sound familiar?

When you get to the first tee, you introduce yourself to the three nice ladies who are probably just as nervous as you. Just like any other social situation when you are feeling awkward and embarrassed; fake it. Extend your hand, smile, and introduce yourself. Maybe you should throw in a little, "I can't believe how nervous I am!"

Off you go. You hit some good ones. You hit some bad ones. You wish you had made that four-foot putt. You can't believe that 20-footer went in. It's not any different than any other day of the course.

Except.

Remember that entry fee that you thought was too much. How is this for value; a couple of rounds of golf on a really nice course, range balls, lunch and prizes. You are guaranteed to meet women just like you.

You can expect a goodie bag full of interesting items. The event volunteers are going to greet you with a smile and will be ready to answer any of your questions. It's practically a party atmosphere.

Because these events are always flighted, you will be playing with women that have a game just like yours. That top flight has nothing to do with you – unless you are toting around a handicap less than 10. Those ladies are on the other end of the golf course. They play a game I will never achieve, but they are sure fun to watch.

This is for those 18-30 handicappers who are convinced they don't belong in a tournament. Not only do you belong; you are welcome.

So, get your Google on and start checking out a whole new way to experience this game we all love. A good start is the Carolinas Golf Association. In addition to the events listed under the Women's Golf tab, women are welcome and encouraged to play the majority of the events listed under the category called "One-Day Tournaments". If you find all of the information a bit overwhelming, just call the Carolinas Golf Association. They will be happy to help you get involved. www.carolinasgolf.org

For the members of women's golf associations around town, check out Tarheels and Pinetops. These are budget friendly events that are played fairly close to home. Each club involved with these events has a local representative to help you get started.

Of course, the Moore County Women's Amateur. That will be played at the newly renovated Mid Pines Golf Club. The dates are July 14-15. There is no handicap limit and yes, you compete within your flight. www.moorecountywomensamateur.com

Even if you are already a member of a local club, check out the Executive Women's Golf Association of the Sandhills. Besides all of their local events, you can take a chance at playing into their national championship that will be in Nashville. www.orgsites.com/nc/ewgasandhills

I don't want to leave out those of you that hang out in the top flight. This year's Women's Eastern Championship is close by. They will be competing on The Founders course at St. James, NC. This one takes a handicap index less than 11 (I know you are out there). Again, flighted and the added bonus of visiting nearby Oak Island to enjoy the rest of the day on the beach. Check out www.womenseastern.org

A more adventurous road trip will take you to Oklahoma City to experience the match play championship conducted by the Women's Southern Golf Association. It takes an 18.4 handicap or better to get in. www.womens-southerngolfassociation.org

This is just the tip of the "Golfburg". There are invitations from all over the state and they are fabulous. A few that come to mind are Rock Barn in Hickory, Pinewood in Asheboro, and River Landing in Wallace. You are going to have to do your own research to track all those down but I guarantee you they are worth the effort.

And believe or not, if you are 50+ and have a handicap of 15 or better, you can enter the Irish Women's Senior championships. As in – play a tournament in Ireland. The entry fee is €40, that's about \$55. <http://www.ilgu.ie> for the Irish Ladies Golf Union. This one is on my bucket list. I just hope the handicap holds up while I save for the airfare.

Okay, ladies – no excuses, Let's Play Golf.