



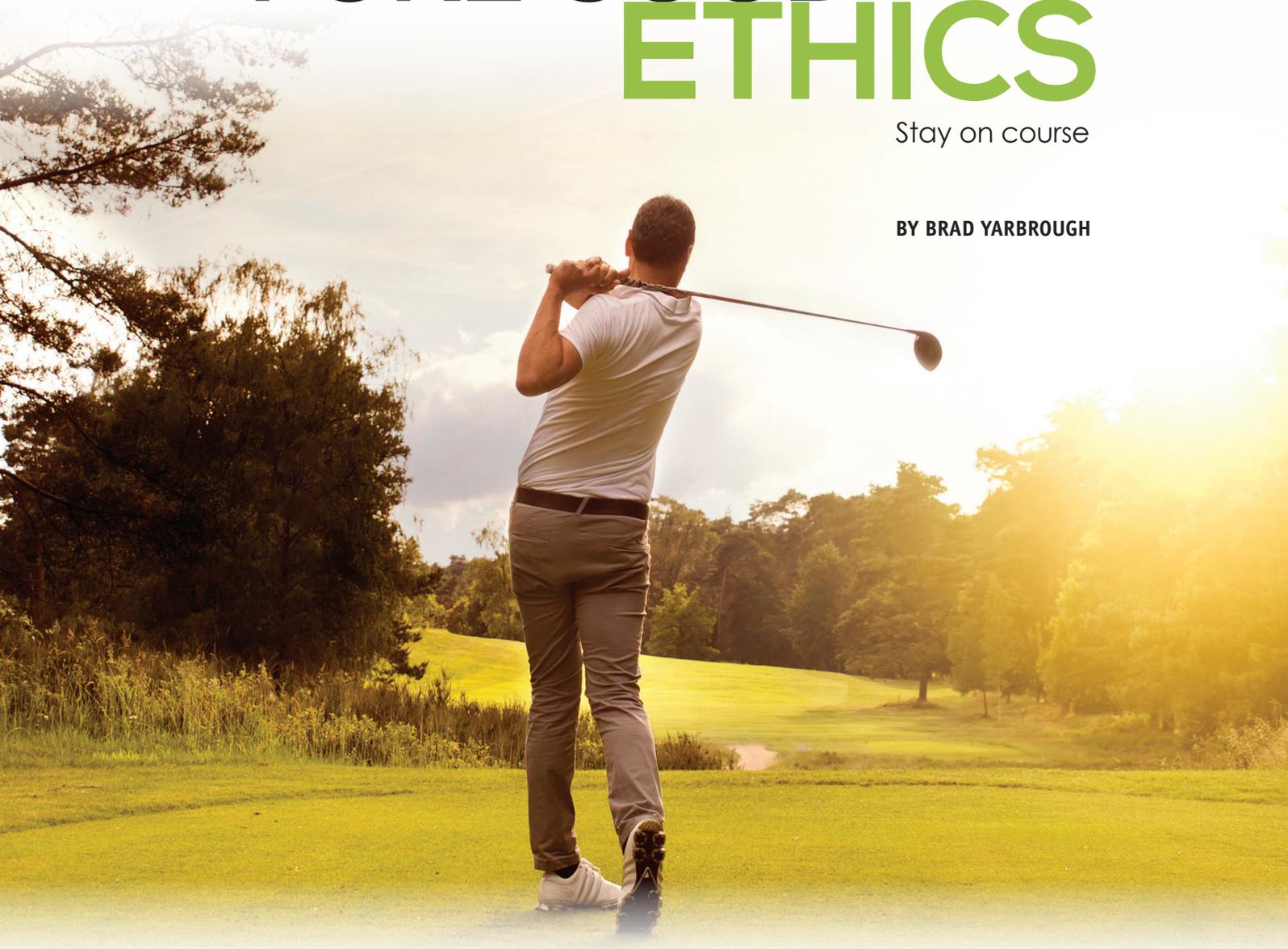
**Springtime!** Here in the northern hemisphere, the frigid temperatures and snow are gone. Now, it's time to celebrate on your favorite course. Go grab the clubs and play a round of golf, one of the world's most popular sports. After all, golfing has many benefits — developing friendships, creating business networks, burning calories, increasing stamina, sharpening problem solving skills and strengthening ethical convictions. Ethical convictions? Absolutely! It's been declared that ethics are the foundation for the game of golf.

It's a game played by the rules. All sports have them. But few other sports have instructions that are so concise and clear. Also, there's no referee or umpire, in the typical sense of officiating, hovering over contestants. No, this game relies on the participants to make critical calls. Individual honesty is truly a hallmark of golf. How a person handles the pressures of performance and stress of competition while on the course reveals a lot about that individual's character.

# FORE GOOD ETHICS

Stay on course

BY BRAD YARBROUGH





A round of golf is usually played in groups of two, three or four, with each person facing the same course conditions. The par settings, hole placement, fairway boundaries, obstacles and distances from the tee to the hole are identical for every player. The entire outcome — the score — of a round of golf requires a method to measure and must be equally applied to every player. The results of a golfer's performance on each hole is written onto a scorecard ... the official scorecard.

Even though it is against the formal rules of golf, beginners are often allowed to replay a stroke when the ball is badly hit and the player wants a second chance. This is called a "mulligan." For most, it's a chance to "maul it again." What's really needed is more practice. It's springtime. This is your chance. Set a goal of lowering your score by a few strokes.

A joke has been often told about the easiest way to lower your golf score. The answer: Put an eraser on your golf pencil. A few years ago, speaking to a crowd of industry professionals, I put golf pencils on tables where seminar attendees sat. I asked, "How long is a golf pencil?" Are you surprised that most guesses were close to the correct length of 3½ inches? Why? Because we all grew up using a ruler or yardstick to measure items. Additionally, an inch is ... an inch. No one has changed this standard. All of us know the approximate length of an inch versus a foot or a yard.

So too, ethics depends on standards — standards that are woven into the fabric of a civil and healthy society. It's critical that these standards are taught so that individuals can function properly, productively and ethically in society. This is a vital role of parents, teachers, coaches, and all who have influence on shaping the character of others. This is a distinct responsibility of the IRWA toward its members. Every healthy community has standards. When applied to decision making and behavior, standards maintain or improve the quality of life. Standards promote the dignity and welfare of all individuals.

Until satellite-guided navigation, travelers navigated across enormous expanses of land and ocean with exactness. Their voyages terminated at the desired destinations. How? The stars — stars that are fixed in their location. Every night, they were in their place: fixed points, perfect for providing directions. What's happened to many of the time-tested, traditional standards that defined "ethical behavior"? I believe that the fixed values that determine ethical behavior are, in some instances, being obscured or eliminated in our current culture. Do you agree that we should be careful not to unwisely modify behavior standards?

Yes, it's springtime. The dormant winter has moved aside for the fresh newness of this season. Also, though seasons change, some things are best left in place. Golf reminds us that rules, measurements and boundaries are critical to the game. More importantly, honesty, patience, comradery and respect for others are fundamental to ethical success. We can't all play par golf or ever experience a "hole in one." But we can all be ethical. It just takes desire and the intentional practice of ethical conduct. ✪



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