

Houston Amateur Golf Association

New Member Information

- New members joining HAGA for the first time are designated as **"Specials."**
- Specials are required to complete a minimum of three HAGA events **and** have an official USGA GHIN handicap index before being included in the Flight competition with other members.
- Special members compete amongst one another in a separate Special Flight
- Results for the Special flight are based on net scoring results. Depending on the number of Specials in the event, 1-3 places usually qualify for prize money.
- Specials may compete in all the optional cash games, except for the Players' Pool (Low Net)

Tournament Information

- Upon arrival at the tournament site, players must check in with Linda Hill, the HAGA Tournament Administrator at least 30 minutes before your start time.
- Scorecards are distributed individually at check-in.
- HAGA's Tournament Director (Ron Hill) arranges the HAGA schedule and selects the courses we play, based on member input and availability.
- HAGA's goal is to remain affordable and still play as many of the best area courses available.
- HAGA events are played on Sundays, usually every other weekend, adjusted for holidays & major events.
- Members are not required to play a minimum number of events, although qualification for our Club Championship requires a minimum of six events in the calendar year.
- Target Yardage is 6,600 – 7,000 for Bomb Squad, 6,300 to 6,500 for regular members, 5,800 to 6,000 for Seniors, 5,500 to 5,800 for Senior + and Women.
- Members are paired at random with other members, but we do try to keep low handicap players together.

Handicap System

- The USGA has adopted the World Handicap System
- Your HAGA membership includes a USGA/GHIN handicap index.
- Player index is updated daily and is based on the best 8 scores of the past 20 rounds.
- This index is then used to calculate a Course Handicap for each event using the slope and course, ratings and tees being played.
- HAGA also maintains a separate index for HAGA events. HAGA will use the lower of the two indexes to determine the Course Handicap for a specific event.

How does HAGA Organize the Tournaments?

- Format for all HAGA events is individual stroke play.
 - We do include one team event each year; 2-man "Fourball"; players may choose their partner or have one assigned to them.
 - HAGA also conducts an individual Match Play tournament each spring (see below for details)
- Based on the number of members participating in the event, the field is evenly divided into equal size flights.
 - The target is to have the same number of players in each flight (12 to 13), and to pay the same number of prizes to each flight, Example:
 - 60 players would have 5 flights of 12.
 - 4-5 flights are common: Championship Flight, First Flight, Second Flight, Third Flight, etc.
- Players are assigned to flights based on their course handicap.
- The player's gross score, minus his course handicap, determines his final net score.

Prizes:

- A portion of each players' entry fee includes a contribution to the event prize fund. We strive to pay out 100% of this fund at each event.
- HAGA will determine the number of places to pay, based on the number of players in each flight.
- Minimum of four and up to five places may be paid, depending on the size of the field for the event.
- Prize money not collected by the player immediately after the event is credited to the member's BlueGolf account, which can be used for future registrations.

Senior Members

- **Members aged 62 and up** have the option to play as a "Senior" from the next tee forward.
- New "Special" members may join HAGA as a "Senior Special" and play from Senior tees in his first event.
- Members must declare in advance of the first event.
- Once declared, must play as a Senior for the entire year, with one opportunity to "UNDO" before June 1.
- After June 1, members may not change to Senior or back to regular "Active" status for the rest of the year.
- Senior Rules & Procedures will be sent to you separately.
- **Senior Plus** option is open to current HAGA members at least 80 years of age. Members will play one tee forward of the Seniors. **Senior Plus option is only open to existing HAGA Senior members.**

The “Bomb Squad”

- HAGA has created a separate designation for low handicap players, called the Bomb Squad
- Players must have a maximum of 8.0 GHIN index to qualify.
- Players will play one tee position behind the regular members.
- Just as the Seniors, Bomb Squad members may opt out before June 1 each year.
- Players must maintain the 8.0 index or will be forced to return to the regular members’ tee.
- See the separate Bomb Squad Rules & Procedures

Forward Active

- For members with a GHIN index of 15.0 or higher, HAGA will move the player up to the next tee box, equivalent to the tees played by Senior players.
- When the member sustains a GHIN index of under 15.0 for 3 consecutive months, he will be moved to the Regular member tees.

Optional Cash Games

- In addition to prize awards for winners, there are optional cash wagers that can be made at each tournament, by placing \$5 in each “pot”:
 - Deuces Wild – any 2 splits the pot (Birdie or Eagle) – note a hole in one does not qualify for Deuces Wild
 - Skins – Birdie (or better), lowest gross score on the hole, out of the entire field, with no ties per hole. Split the pot among the skins that hold up.
 - All cash in these two pots is divided equally and shared by the winning members.
 - \$10 pot for “Low Gross” – for lowest gross score – one winner collects all of this pot.
 - “Players’ Pool” is the “Low Net” score, after the course handicap is assigned (Specials cannot participate in this game due to Handicap requirement. Up to five winners are paid.
 - “Hole in One” pool is \$5 and continues until a member in the pool makes an ace, then we start over with another pool.
 - These optional cash prizes are paid at the end of the event, or can be picked up at the next event; they are not posted as credit to your BlueGolf account.

Player of the Year Points and HAGA Playoffs

- Players earn Player of the Year (POY) points for completing a tournament. Minimum of 20 POY points are awarded to all who post a score.
- Standard POY point awards for each flight:

2025 Points		2025 Points	
PLACE	POY POINTS	PLACE	POY POINTS
1	200	6	100
2	180	7	80
3	160	8	60
4	140	9	40
5	120	10 +	20

- POY points accumulate from October 1 through September 30 of the following year, and then reset Oct. 1 to zero

The Club Championship

- All members may participate in the 2-day Club Championship tournament.
- Players with fewer than 6 rounds since January 1 will compete in a separate flight and prize money will be based on the number of participants in the flight.
- Specials will compete in the Special flight.
- Qualified members will compete in flights of 10 – 14 players in each flight, with 2-day aggregate score determining the winners.
- Low Net Score from all flights is declared the Club Champion
- HAGA also recognizes the Low Gross score as a Club Champion
- Aside from your name on the trophy and tournament prize money, there are no added prizes for either Club Champion.
- POY Point Prizes:

2025 POY AWARDS					
PLACE	PRIZE MONEY	FREE GOLF	Golf \$	Total \$	POY Points
1	\$450	5 Rounds	\$700	\$1,150	400
2	\$300	4 Rounds	\$560	\$860	360
3	\$225	3 Rounds	\$420	\$645	320
4	\$150	2 Rounds	\$280	\$430	280
5	\$125	1 Round	\$140	\$265	240
6	\$100	0		\$100	200
7	\$100	0		\$100	160
8	\$100	0		\$100	120
9	\$100	0		\$100	80
10	\$100	0		\$100	40
Total	\$1,750	\$2,100	\$2,100	\$3,850	

Registration for Tournaments

- Players register online, and the deadline is set for each tournament based on course requirements. A \$10 Late Fee is assessed to any late registration.
- HAGA uses BlueGolf.com as our registration website.
- Upon joining, members will create an ID and password for their BlueGolf membership, and will add personal info and a credit card for entry fees.
- All charges are made via credit card placed on file with your HAGA profile.
- An additional fee is charged to the player for the Blue Golf website cost (3.5%) and to the credit card processor (3.25%), however no sales tax is charged.
- Most events are \$120-140 including prize money plus approximately \$7.00 for processing and BlueGolf fees.
- Cancellations must be made by Saturday 10:00 am in order to receive credit for the event.

Live Scoring

- HAGA uses BlueGolf Live Scoring to keep scores and a paper card as a backup.
- Members should download this “Amateur Golf” app:



- For each tournament, the members in a foursome will elect one player to track all scores.

Posting of Scores

- HAGA will post all HAGA scores to each player’s GHIN record.
- Occasionally, HAGA will play a course that is not rated by the USGA; in this event, HAGA does not post scores from the event (the member should not post either).
- In accordance with USGA requirements, players are required to post all non-HAGA scores to GHIN.
- Players should familiarize themselves with the rules and standards for posting scores for rounds outside HAGA events.

How to Cancel or Withdraw from a tournament

- Players who are registered but cannot play in an event will usually receive credit for your entry fee to your BlueGolf account. Golf Club of Houston cancellations will receive a voucher for GCOH play.
- Player must email Linda Hill at LMMBH@comcast.net **as soon as possible.**
- After pairings are sent to the course, HAGA is often financially responsible to pay for the number of

players in the pairings. In this case, if a member cancels after 10:00 a.m. Saturday, he may not receive any credit for his entry fee and will forfeit same.

- We appreciate as much advance notice as possible, so we can rearrange flights and pairings as needed.
- **To withdraw from an event in progress**, the player MUST stop at the scoring table and inform Linda Hill of his decision to withdraw.
- Players should be sensitive to their playing partners and how the WD will impact the group, specifically so the remaining players will have a “marker” for scoring purposes, or if the WD will impact pace of play for those remaining in the tournament.

HAGA Match Play Tournament

- HAGA conducts an annual, five-month Match Play Tournament with a 32-player limit.
 - All HAGA members with a GHIN index as of the registration date are eligible to participate.
 - Specials must have completed 3 HAGA rounds and have an active GHIN index to participate.
 - Participating players will be issued HAGA Match Play Rules prior to the first round.
 - Players are seeded by POY points.
 - POY point leader picks the tees and venue to play.
 - Both players play the same tees in this event
 - Players pay a \$60 entry fee and compete head-to-head with other members at courses and on dates convenient to both players.
 - Players will pay green fees for each Match Play round in which they participate, based on prevailing rates at the courses.
 - Players earn POY Points for their participation in this event, included in the Match Play Rules
 - POY Points are awarded at the end of August for all participants.
 - Prize money is split among the top 16 from the \$60 entry fees (100% is paid out)

South Texas Match Play Challenge

- HAGA schedules an annual competition with the South Texas Amateur Golf Tour, with a 2-day Match Play event in November, alternating between Houston and San Antonio
- Saturday is a team event, Sunday is a Singles event.
- The 20-member HAGA team is selected based on POY Points after the Club Championship in September
- To help defray the cost of uniforms, HAGA members are given the option to contribute to the uniform fund each time they register for an event.

Rules of Play

- USGA rules govern all play and HAGA members cannot waive any rule on their own.
- HAGA members are expected to know the current USGA rules and HAGA Local Rules (at HAGA.org)
- Members should download the USGA Rules app for your phone.
- When in doubt as to the Rules, players should play a second ball in accordance with Rule 20.1 and confer with the Rules Committee prior to submitting their scorecard. Pictures are recommended.
- Players must hole out on all holes (no “gimmies”)
- HAGA local rules include Alternative to Stroke & Distance penalty, for a **lost ball or OB**; allows a 2-stroke penalty instead of stroke and distance (see the diagram on the last page)
- Your score is recorded by a playing competitor, called a “Marker.”
- Both Player and Marker must sign the scorecard
- **The player is responsible for accuracy of score posted on each individual hole**, not just the total. Signing for an incorrect hole score can lead to DQ.
- The player should ensure Eagles and Birdies are circled for any optional cash game payouts.
- Tournament Director may elect to implement our Mud Ball Local Rule for specific events based on condition. No player may elect to use this on his own.
- For prize money, ties are decided through a playoff calculation built into the scoring system, to identify the 1st, 2nd, 3rd place, etc.
- Tiebreakers are based on standards such as last 9, last 6, last 3, etc., which are built into Golf Genius, the HAGA scoring system.

Player Conduct

- Players are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner before, during & after the event.
- HAGA players are guests of the course and are expected to behave politely on the course and in the clubhouse.
- Players are expected to adhere to standard golf club dress code for appropriate apparel choices (no denim, collared shirts, etc.).

Prompt Pace of Play

- Although tournament golf may take longer than a social round, Members are still expected to maintain a good pace of play.
- HAGA’s target pace is a 4.5-hour round.

- Low Handicap player in each foursome acts as the “Pace of Play Captain,” who will offer instruction to keep the group moving; all players are expected to respect the need to keep up their pace
- As a guideline, if the group ahead of you is on the green or farther when you reach the tee, you are out of position and need to pick up your pace.
- Groups are expected to self-police their pace to keep up with the group ahead.
- HAGA plays “ready golf” on all shots; Please be ready to go, and hit the ball in 40 seconds or less.
- If another golfer is away and you intend to play before he does, you are expected to announce your intention prior to playing the shot (i.e., “I’m going to play my shot now”)
- HAGA’s Local Rules allow for the right to penalize all players in a group that finishes more than 20 minutes behind the group in front of them. Penalty is 2 strokes for all players in the group, unless the group finishes in 4.5 hours or less.
- The group time is posted when at least one member submits a signed scorecard to the scorer’s table.

Turn in Your Score Card

- We expect players to turn in the paper scorecard before going to your car, so your group is “off the clock.”
- All players are expected to sign the scorecard at the completion of play – you must sign your scorecard, or you will be disqualified.
- Players should bring the card directly to the scoring table and ensure their finishing time is recorded.
- The time recorded is used to determine if the group is out of position, so it is essential the scorecards get to the table as soon as possible.
- It is the player’s responsibility to ensure any Birdies or Eagles are circled on the scorecard to qualify for payout in the Cash Games
- The player is responsible for the accuracy of all individual hole scores and should confirm that the total for Front, Back and Total are included.
- The Player is responsible to make sure his scores are all legible and that there are no extraneous markings other than circles on Birdies or double circle on Eagles on the card. **No other marks, please!**

Communication Before Tournaments

- Members are responsible for confirming if they are properly registered by way of the confirmation email received immediately following registration for the tournament. If you did not receive this email, you are not registered.
- Members will receive a second email message on Thursday to confirm their registration prior to a Sunday tournament. If you register after Wednesday at midnight, you will not receive this confirmation.
- On the day before the tournament, players will receive an email to confirm their tee time and playing group. If you do not receive his message, you are not registered.
- The Tournament Director will send **Terms of Competition** to all registered players on the day before the tournament, which outlines the conditions and requirements of the tournament. If you do not receive this email, you are not registered.

Communication on the Day of Tournaments

- Players will be sent a text message before the start of the event for any changes or important information. Before starting play, please check your text messages.
- During play, the Tournament Director may send text messages to players for important information, such as a delay due to weather conditions, resumption of play or other important information. Players should monitor their text messages for any such updates.

HAGA Rules Committee

- HAGA Rules Committee is intended to promote member education regarding the Rules of Golf, and to ensure the Rules are followed at each event.
- Members of the Rules Committee are available after each round and can be contacted at any time to answer questions or provide rulings.
- When in doubt, take a picture of the situation and tell your playing companions you are going to play two balls. The player may then appeal the Rules member for a ruling after play has concluded.
- **Current Rules Committee Members:**
 - Robert Curran
 - Chip Block
 - Brian Johnson
 - Randy Mackay.

HAGA Handicap Committee

- The HAGA Handicap Committee meets quarterly to review individual player handicaps to ensure the accuracy of player handicaps.
- The role of the Handicap Committee is to ensure the accuracy of handicaps for each player.
- The Committee may consider extenuating circumstances for a player with an injury that might require an adjustment to their current handicap.
- The committee will also consider the need to adjust a player's GHIN index based on player manipulation.
- **Current Handicap Committee Members:**
 - Robert Curran – Chairman
 - Brian Johnson – HAGA Handicap Chairman
 - Steve Mills – BOD Member at large
 - Harold Newhouse – BOD Member at Large

Elections and Current Board of Directors Members

- Director and At Large Members are elected in even numbered years via electronic voting.
- Please contact Randy Mackay with any Membership questions. (713) 494-5501

Current Board of Directors (Oct 2024 – Sep 2026)

- **President – George Harlow**
thehrharlows@comcast.net
- **Treasurer –Jeff Pauley**
jpauley61@gmail.com
- **Tournament Director – Ron Hill**
rlhometx@comcast.net
- **Handicap Chairman – Brian Johnson**
Bhdcjohnson@live.com
- **Membership Chairman – Randy Mackay**
Dennis.Mackay@gmail.com
- **Secretary – Lundin Schneider**
lundins@comcast.net
- **“At Large Members”:**

Mike Bunn	Robert Curran	Robbie Guinn
Nick Loughlin	Steve Mills	Harold Newhouse

HOUSTON AMATEUR GOLF ASSOCIATION LOCAL RULES (Rev. OCTOBER 2024)

All tournaments are played in accordance with USGA rules and HAGA Local Rules. Each Player is responsible for knowing any additional rules for a specific tournament before play begins.

Some courses have a list of Local Rules on their scorecards. In general, rules identifying penalty areas, out of bounds, and no play zones and those protecting young trees and flowers can be used. However, local rules which modify USGA rules are **NOT VALID for HAGA** tournaments (i.e. ball drops at penalty areas, winter rules, etc.). Drop zones cannot be used unless the Tournament Director approves their use.

1. CODE OF CONDUCT

Contestants (and their caddies/guests) are to observe proper golf etiquette at all times. Any abuse or disrespect of fellow competitors, employees and other players of the host facility, or other persons conducting or attending an HAGA event can be grounds for disqualification from the event and possible rejection of entry to future HAGA events. Such abuse may be verbal, physical or by threat and includes, but is not limited to, the use of obscene language, physical damage to property or equipment of the host facility, and abuse of alcohol or controlled substances during a competitive round.

Some courses have a particular dress code, and this information may be obtained from the course prior to play. HAGA's dress code is straight forward; no cut off shorts, no sleeveless tee shirts and no tank tops. It is the responsibility of each Player to present themselves in accordance with golf course policy. Remember that we are guests at ALL courses!

2. PROMPT PACE of PLAY (K-1)

A group which finishes their round more than 20 minutes behind the group in front of them has violated the Prompt Pace of Play Rule and each Player in the group may be assessed a two-stroke penalty. There is no penalty if the group's total time is 4 hours 30 minutes or less. If the first group finishes their round in a time which the Tournament Committee deems unreasonable, each Player in that group may be assessed a two-stroke penalty. Any appeal of a slow play penalty must be made to the Rules Committee before all scores for the group are posted.

3. HAGA occasionally plays courses that have not been marked to USGA guidelines. The following local rule has been established for such courses:

OUT OF BOUNDS

- A ball which comes to rest on or across a paved area, including roads and parking lots but not cart paths, is out of bounds **(A-2)**.
- A ball, which comes to rest on property which is not part of the golf course, such as a residential yard, is out of bounds **(A-1)**.

4. RELIEF FROM ABNORMAL COURSE CONDITIONS

- **CRACKS IN THE GROUND (F-8)** - many courses, particularly in the dry summer months, have large cracks in the ground. If a ball in the general area or on the putting green comes to rest in a crack at least one-quarter of an inch wide caused by hot dry conditions, the Player may take relief under Rule 16.1. Interference does not exist if the crack only interferes with the Player's stance or, on the [putting green](#), the [line of play](#).
- **AERATION HOLES (E-4)** - if a ball lies in or touches an aeration hole in the general area or on the putting green, the Player may take relief under Rule 16.1. Interference does not exist if the aeration hole only interferes with the Player's stance or, on the putting green, the line of play.

5. **ALTERNATIVE TO STROKE AND DISTANCE FOR LOST BALL OR BALL OUT OF BOUNDS (E-5)**

When a player's ball cannot be found or is known or virtually certain to be out of bounds, the player has the option of taking a two-stroke penalty rather than proceeding under stroke and distance. This option cannot be used when the ball is known or virtually certain to be in a penalty area or the player has played a provisional ball. If neither the original ball nor the provisional ball can be found, this two-stroke penalty option may be used for the provisional.

For **two penalty strokes**, the player may take relief by dropping a ball inside the relief area formed by:

- a line from the hole through the ball reference point (where the original ball is estimated to have come to rest or went out of bounds)
- a line from the hole through the point **on the fairway of the hole being played** that is nearest to the ball reference point. For purposes of this Local Rule, "fairway" means any area of grass in the general area cut to fairway height or less.
- two club-lengths to the outside of either line.

The drop must be in the general area and no nearer the hole than the ball reference point. See Diagram on page 3.

6. **CLEANING BALL (E-2) – "Mud Ball Rule" - HAGA Alternative to Lift, Clean & Place**

Occasional mud on your ball is part of golf and the ball is just played as it lies. But when the course is so wet (or may become so wet) that mud will often be on golf balls the Tournament Director may decide ahead of an event to allow the ball to be picked up and cleaned. Players cannot decide to do this on their own. When this Local Rule is in effect:

- The ball may be lifted, cleaned, and replaced without penalty when the ball lies anywhere in the general area (fairways and rough) but not in penalty areas or bunkers.
- You must mark the spot of the ball before lifting it (see Rule 14.1).
- The ball must be replaced on its original spot (see Rule 14.2).
- If the ball does not stay on its original spot, you must try a second time. If the ball again does not stay on that spot, you must place the ball at the nearest spot where it will stay at rest that is not nearer the hole and is in the general area.
- If your ball has been replaced and is at rest, and then moves, there is no penalty and the ball must be played from its new spot, unless another Rule applies.

If you have an embedded ball or interference from temporary water, you would take relief from those conditions first and then use this Local Rule.

7. Players may typically bring guests or a caddie but there are exceptions so the Player should check with the course directly. HAGA has adopted the following local rule regarding minors - Players may not bring onto the course any child under the age of 12. Breach of this rule is immediate disqualification, and the Player will be asked to leave the course. HAGA takes no responsibility for the safety and well-being of any Player and/or guest during an HAGA tournament.

GOLF'S NEW RULES: STROKE AND DISTANCE

A new Local Rule provides an alternative to stroke-and-distance relief for a ball that is lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds, effective January 1, 2019.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS



LOST BALL



If the Local Rule is in effect, you can still take stroke-and-distance relief, but you now have the following additional option that comes with a penalty of two strokes:

A DETERMINE SPOT where your ball went out of bounds (left diagram) or is likely to be lost (right diagram).

B FIND NEAREST FAIRWAY EDGE no closer to the hole.

C DROP YOUR BALL IN SHADED AREA as defined on one side by a line from the hole through point A and on the other side by a line from the hole through point B, and not nearer the hole. The relief area is extended on both sides by two club-lengths.

This Local Rule is not intended for higher levels of play, such as professional or elite amateur level competitions.



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