



CLUB FIXTURE LIST

Neil Hallam-Jones offers tips on managing play on the course.

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You may be lucky and have stepped into a job in which the pressure on the Club’s facilities is balanced, reasonably set in stone and cannot be changed. If, however, you are forever trying to fend off another competition because the widow of a well respected member has presented an EPNS Salver which could be fitted in this year because September has five Sundays, or the Veterans would like to play a match against the newly opened Boggy Golf Club, I can recommend considering formalising your fixtures and competitions so that continuity prevails. Members and visitors tend to accept most procedures at a Golf Club if they have been informed in advance. Therefore, if your fixture calendar is going to perform in a set regular pattern, staff, members and visitors will be able to plan their contact with the Golf Club accordingly.

Proprietary or Private Members Club?

The first consideration must be the priority which is set by the Club owner or Directors/Committee. For example, if you are the Administrator of a Proprietary Club the emphasis will probably be on fitting as many tee times as possible with fee paying visitors. When this is the case and visitors have priority this can have a detrimental effect on the regular income that can be achieved from the members. Private Members Clubs are also looking to maximise their potential as more and more clubs take a business approach to the finances of the Club.

Reducing the number of visitors obviously reduces the revenue in green fees but it also effects the trade in bar and catering. In my own Club, for example, the current set up of catering could not exist without the income from visitors. Similarly, your Professional should be considered if reducing visitors. For the purpose of this paper the recommendations lean towards the organisation of a Private Members Club with a requirement to derive a reasonable percentage of income from visitors.

Visiting Parties

In deciding how many visiting parties to allow through the week a **budget figure** must be agreed in the financial forecast for the year.

Example:	Target figure for green fees in total	£75,000
	Visiting parties	£50,000
	Casual green fees	£25,000

By looking back at previous year's income figures, a trend will emerge which should allow a reasonable prediction.

Then we need to programme a suitable amount of **space in the fixture list** to allow visiting parties and casual green fees. Let's then say on average a visiting party is 20 strong and pay a green fee of £30.

$£50,000 \div 30 = 1667 \div 20 = 83$ visiting parties required.

Now consider how many weeks of the year you can reasonably **guarantee the course** will be playable. Again for example let's say from mid March to mid October is the normal season. It is easy then to calculate the number of days of the week required to achieve £50,000 and in this case three days a week over a thirty week period will accommodate ninety visiting parties.

Unfortunately we cannot guarantee all parties will be twenty strong, some will be twelve or fourteen but in the same way some will be thirty or forty. It is therefore good practice to make a minimum and maximum number which will fit in with the other considerations like numbers in dining room, time of year. At my Club the minimum is twelve allowing a thirty minute tee reservation and the maximum is forty allowing two hours. These timings are generous on purpose to take account of the lack of local knowledge of some parties.

Therefore, to recap, we will accept three visiting parties per week from mid March to Mid October. We now need to decide which days of the week that will be! Also consider the staff and time off - some Clubs still have a set day of the week for the Stewards time off.

Sections in the Clubs - Ladies, Seniors/Veterans

If these sections within the Club do not have a set day it would be very surprising. In most cases it will be at best one morning and at worst two days a week. For the purpose of this exercise let's say Tuesday is Ladies day - all day and every Tuesday of the year. Similarly Veterans Day is Thursday but accept for the first Thursday of the month all the Veterans have played by lunchtime.

Therefore, the obvious days to accept visiting parties will be Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Also as a minimum and a maximum size of party has been set their tee off times can be published eg Visiting Parties will only be accepted on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and tee off:

- ☞ Mornings from 9.00am to 11.00am
- ☞ Afternoons from 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Team Matches

All sections within the Club will have team matches, be they social fixtures with local Clubs or League or Knockouts set by other golfing bodies. It is therefore a big advantage if the home match takes place on the same set day of the week. This then spreads the load on, not only the course, but also, the dining room.

If there is no set pattern to team matches set yourself a two year target to achieve your desired day for each team. It is a good idea to speak to the Vice Captains of each section before they come into office and enlist their support if they are the ones who are involved with arranging matches. Also send a note to all Clubs concerned informing them of your intentions.

The Ladies here at my Club agreed a Friday and tee off at 12.30pm. The Veterans chose a Monday and also tee off at 12.30pm. Men's League, Knockout and Social matches are played mainly on Wednesday evenings at 4.30pm. Obviously a good run in a Knockout tournament a Club team will need some crisis arrangement but as long as some consideration has been given to free play at weekends this should not prove too difficult.

The week therefore looks something like this if all matches are at home and a full booking of visiting parties.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
	VP	Ladies Day	VP	Vets am	VP	
	Vets Team				Ladies Team	
	VP		VP		VP	
			Match			

Free Time

If you are going to achieve your casual green fee total there must be an amount of time in the week and weekends to allow for this. Similarly members will not be too pleased if they cannot get on their golf course. Setting times around the other commitments will accommodate this.

Eg Weekdays no visitors until 8.30am

Weekends no visitors until 9.30am (competitions permitting).

Not forgetting the visiting party bookings being clear of the tee by 11.00am and not back until 2.00pm, ample time can be achieved during the week. After all most casual golf starts first thing in the morning, lunchtime or early evening.

Club Competitions

Having allocated a set day of the week to the Ladies and Veterans they are free to organise their fixtures as they see fit. It is however a good idea to remind both sections of your timetable with regard to publication of the full fixture list in the Club diary or hand book.

The Men's competitions will possibly be the responsibility of the Club Secretary and in general all take place on either a Saturday or Sunday.

This is a very important part of the fixture list compilation if the green fee levels are going to be achieved and free time for social friendly 4 balls plus internal Knockout rounds are going to take place and the general well being of the Men's section.

For example at my Club we operate in the following fashion:

First Saturday in April Men's Qualifying Medal

First Sunday in May Men's Qualifying Medal

First Saturday in June Men's Qualifying Medal and so on through the season.

Then

Third Sunday in April Men's Qualifying Stableford

Third Saturday in May Men's Qualifying Stableford

Third Sunday in June Men's Qualifying Stableford and again so on through the season.

This alternation through Saturdays and Sundays caters for all the male membership, some of whom may work on Saturdays (or the vicar). To accommodate the regular weekend worker a mid-week qualifying competition is run on a roll up basis and played during the free tee times on a Wednesday.

Add in the Cup competitions which are hopefully one per month. This would leave three occupied weekend days each month. In order of priority other competitions can be added, such as Mixed trophies, Opens, Invitation and Captains Day (a good idea to ask the Captain before setting date).

Consideration should also be given to internal Club Knockout trophies that are played through the season. Last day for play by dates are a good idea for publication and all competitions in this category should conform to the 'play by' dates. The last Saturday or Sunday at the end of the month of each round should be left free to give maximum opportunity for members to play their matches in these competitions. Consideration should also be given to Bank Holidays as these can be a good source of income or a flop of a competition as most members are away on holiday.

With all this information at the forefront of the Secretary's mind he or she is now ready to draw it all together and present it in whatever fashion is appropriate.

Getting it down on paper

Sasco produce a very good 'year planner' series of products which allow certain stickers to be allocated to whatever gender or type of competition or match you care to allocate. If there is method in your madness most of those involved will appreciate your endeavours. A balance of events through the month and, subsequently, through the year, should be the aim, always allowing for free time on the course.

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