

PEOPLE

A link to winning golf games

Perplexing games and strategies are explained in a West Linn man's manual

By **DANA TIMS**
THE OREGONIAN

Ever want to steal your opponent's best golf clubs? Especially that 5-iron that can't seem to miss the green?

If you've spent even five minutes trying to master not only golf but also the many side games that come with it, of course you have. If so, it's time to meet West Linn resident Tom Newton, who has written a pocket-sized book that explains the rules of those games and how to win them.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Newton's 54-page book, which he self-published two months ago, already is picking up steam. Sales here and across the country are increasing.

He's not alone, apparently, in wanting to know how a "press" bet works, or in craving to spice up a round of golf with games called, "Mafia," "The Hat" and "Caddy Shack."

In his day job, Newton does marketing consulting and provides executive coaching for several business owners and a group of Hewlett-Packard senior managers. During some rare spare time, he explained, among other things, why he delved into the world of self-publishing and precisely what constitutes theft on the golf course.

Q: How did you come to write this book?

A: Well, the first time I golfed was when I was 12 and my dad took me along. I've only taken it seriously in recent years. I found that my golfing partners always played games I didn't know. I ended up having to say after each round, "Just tell me how much I owe."

It wasn't long before I figured out that I'd better start understanding these games. From there, I started collecting as many as I could.

Q: Have you made up any games yourself?

Newton's 54-page book, which he self-published



West Linn's Tom Newton coaches business executives for a living. He's now taken the advice he normally gives to clients by writing a book, telling golfers how to play betting games during a round.

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A: One, and it was a disaster. It was so convoluted and complicated that no one could make heads or tails of it. My partners said, "We're going to need a computer to figure out who won today." I learned a lesson from that: don't get too cute with the rules.

Q: Have you personally tried out all the games in your book?

A: I've played them all one way or another. If you know anything about golf, you can figure them out.

Q: Is there any single key or theme to your games?

A: Yes. They can all be played to allow you to post a legitimate score at the end of your round. That's important for maintaining a handicap, which keeps a level playing field for everyone. If you have a handicap, you can play a fair game with anyone, including Tiger Woods.

Q: How much are most amateurs willing to bet during a round?

A: I don't think very many people bet for high stakes. It's mostly to

add a little excitement to the game, maybe \$2 to \$3 per round. But it also depends on your income level. I'm sure Michael Jordan's \$10,000 Nassau would be \$10 for the rest of us.

Q: How do you go about stealing your opponents' clubs?

A: The game is called Mafia. If you win a hole, you get to steal a club from your opponent's bag.

Q: The downside is that you'd then have to carry that club.

A: It comes with a price, yes. But if you win a few holes in a row, you slowly diminish their ability to execute good shots.

Q: How would you rate your own ability on the course?

A: My handicap is a 10.5. That's a pretty middle-of-the-road handicap.

Q: How are book sales and distribution going?

A: I wish I didn't have a real job to get in the way of promoting this. I got the Powell's bookstore at the airport to carry it. Several have sold already. A golf representative I

found through connections is offering it in North and South Carolina. A guy with a golf shop at a mall in Massachusetts has it.

What's really cool are Internet sales — I get up in the morning and see that someone has ordered the book and deposited money in my account. That's pretty amazing.

Q: Do you play year-round?

A: Two years ago, my wife (Cheri) and I joined Willamette Valley Country Club in Canby. It stays in good shape all winter. I decided when we joined I'd play at least once a week and twice if possible. I've been pretty good on the once-a-week.

Q: You do executive coaching for a living. How have your clients reacted to the book?

A: I was reluctant at first to go ahead with this. Several of them said to me, "You have to do this. Do what you advise us to do." They guilted me into moving forward and it turned out fine. It helps to take your own advice sometimes.

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Tom Newton's book is available online at www.greatgamesforgolf.com