

Results of Men's Night Survey

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This survey was undertaken in collaboration with the OVGA to help better understand how different clubs have addressed the organization of men's night. I had an interest in undertaking this survey because we have seen a decline in our own men's night at Rideau Glen over the last few years. I approached the OVGA through Don McGee to see if it would be possible to collaborate in a survey that would provide access to club captains while retaining the privacy of the mailing list. Don kindly brought this issue to the attention of the executive. Permission was granted and Pat Parker agreed to send out my email survey and forward all responses to me. I am indebted to both Don and Pat for their support and important contributions to this survey.

This survey is a starting point for those who want to improve men's night participation and enjoyment. We have organized a committee at Rideau Glen to revitalize our activities. Our planning sessions were ongoing while this survey was undertaken. Many of our ideas and experiences are mirrored in the results of this survey, but we have also already benefited both from new ideas and from the confirmation that what we decided to try seems to be in line with the successes achieved by others. In the final analysis it is the members of the organizing committee of each course and the members themselves who make men's night a success.

On behalf of all members of Rideau Glen and the OVGA, I thank all of the Club Captains who took the time to share their ideas and experience. Your input was extremely useful. Please be assured it will be put to good use.

The survey was developed and sent to a few other golfers involved with men's night to pretest the questionnaire. After this testing, the OVGA distributed the questionnaire to the 61 club captains on their contact list. As of the end of December, replies were received from 21 courses. Not everyone answered every question and in some cases more than one response was provided; therefore, the number of responses does not always total 21. The results of the survey pointed out some common themes in how most men's nights are organized.

Table 1. Night chosen for men's night.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2	3	7	9	0

As seen in Table 1, Thursday and Wednesday are the **most popular nights**. Clearly,

the choice of day and the time of the events must to be worked out in collaboration with the golf course (either the owners, or the pro and staff, depending on the management and ownership structure of the course). One course has 2 men’s nights and 2 ladies’ nights a week and another had one “members” night that includes both men and women. However, in general, courses have a designated night. One course reported that it did not have a men’s night.

As seen in Table 2, having a **specific time during the day** is by far the most common option. If tee times are not designated during a specific time, the next most common option is to use a shotgun start. Generally speaking tee times are set from 4:00 onward at most courses.

Table 2. Time of day men’s night games played.

Any time	After a specific time	Other
3	13	5

The timeframe for the specific times start as early as 12:00 (1 course); after 3:00 (3 courses); after 4:00 (2 courses); after 4:30 (1 course); after 5 (3

courses); after 5:30 (2 courses); and after 6:00 (1 course). Those who selected the “other” category use a shotgun start between 5:00 and 6:00. The later the tee time, the more conducive it is to those who work and have difficulty making it to the course in time to participate both in the golf and other social events. Courses that have a larger proportion of senior or retired members have a tendency to have earlier tee times.

Responsibility for **organization of men’s night** is a shared responsibility at most courses. Club captains are most often responsible for men’s night (Table 3), but in many cases this is a responsibility shared with a men’s night committee, pro-shop staff, and volunteer members. Active involvement of the pro-shop staff (for courses that have pros) was seen as

Table 3. Responsibility for men’s night organization.

Club captain	Men’s captain	Golf course staff	Other
9	5	5	5

important. Having a committee to share responsibility for planning and organization appears to be a useful way to approach men’s night. Not only does this lessen the burden on any one person, it brings more people into the mix for new

ideas for planning and also broadens the range of people who can promote men’s night participation through their range of contacts and friends within the course.

In terms of **success**, about half of the respondents (9) feel that their men’s nights are “very successful;” whereas, 5 feel their activities are “successful;” 5 think they are “somewhat successful;” and 2 rate their men’s night as “not very successful.” Overall, the courses that responded

have successful men’s nights, so their views on how to organize their activities should be useful to those of us who want to improve our club activities.

Eligibility for participation in men’s night varies among courses. Virtually all courses that responded include both regular and senior members in their men’s night activities. More than half also have developed systems to accommodate guests each evening. These courses benefit by having specific men’s night members, encouraging members to invite guests, and by allowing guests to purchase “game cards.” The guests are worked into the scoring system and have an opportunity to win some of the prizes. Fewer courses allow juniors to participate. Exclusion of juniors may be more prevalent at larger courses that have many juniors. Encouraging juniors to participate has, at some courses, had a positive impact on men’s night. It can also be beneficial to the junior members in terms of their integration into other club activities as they “age” and also in helping instill golf etiquette.

Participation in terms of numbers and percentages varies considerably. Obviously, the number of golfers who participate is related directly to the total male membership, but participation on a percentage basis most often reaches between 30% and 50% (see Tables 4 and 5). For courses below this level of participation, this provides a handy target to try to achieve.

Table 4. Number of men who participate.

Fewer than 20	20–40	40–60	More than 60
3	5	3	13

Table 5. Percentage of male members who participate.

Less than 10%	10–30%	30–50%	More than 50%
2	4	11	3

Courses that have limited participation might want to consider including junior members, developing schemes and games that encourage members to invite guests, and working with their golf course to create men’s night packages such as 10 game cards that can be used on men’s night for somewhat discounted green fees.

The **cost of men’s night participation** varies quite considerably from club to club, but

there is an even split between those courses that charge a flat rate for the year and those that charge on a night-to-night basis. Only one course includes the cost of men’s night in member’s fees and the only additional cost is for food. The rate charged on a yearly basis varies, but it tends to be either about \$40–50 or \$80–120 for the year. Some courses charge a flat charge of about \$20 to join men’s night and then a weekly cost in addition of about \$2–5 per night. Our own experience with charging a small amount each week was that it was an administrative headache to have to collect a small amount each week and we have opted for an all-inclusive fee. Those

courses that do charge on a weekly basis generally charge between \$3 and \$10. One course charges \$25 for members and \$35 for non-members for golf, a hot meal, and a drink ticket. In some cases, the weekly fee includes such related activities as 50:50 and closest to the pin competitions. Other weekly charges are for skins games, which are optional in all cases.

All of the courses organize men’s night as a **9-hole event**, and alternate between back and front nines on a weekly basis. A common comment was that although men’s night is officially only 9 holes, members want to play as many holes as possible. That desire is accommodated but scoring is restricted to the designated holes and tee times for the men’s night must be observed.

The **format selected for play** is an important part of men’s night success. None of the courses use only gross scores. All scoring is based on some sort of handicap system. As seen in Table 6, an equal number of courses use a combined net and gross system and a net-score only system. More than half the courses use some sort of men’s night specific scoring system. This is most often a handicap-based modified Stableford system.

Table 6. Scoring system used for men’s night.

Gross only	Net and gross	Net only	Other
0	6	6	12

The Stableford system is modified to make it as easy as possible for all levels of golfer to win prizes each week. Some courses arrange team events in

conjunction with the Stableford scoring. Match play is used in one club and skins are also used occasionally (in one case a net skins for handicaps over 11 and gross skins for those below 11). In terms of team versus individual play, 9 courses reported that they used teams; whereas, 14 organize events on an individual basis. In some cases, teams are established for specific nights (scrambles for example). In one case, teams are used but they are changed each night.

One respondent gave **details of the modified Stableford system** they use. “Golfers get half their handicap that goes toward their points and the points are worth: double bogie 0 points (pick up because it doesn’t affect your total points); bogie:1 point; par 2 points; birdie 3 points; eagle 4 points. For example, I’m a 4 handicap so I get 2 points. If I shot 35 and my total my scoring points are worth 19, my score would be $19 + 2 = 21$ points. If I shot 39, and my points are worth 15, my score would be $15 + 2 = 17$ points. We award prizes to A, B, C Flights.”

The **most popular additional game** organized on men’s night is skins, which is part of men’s night for 12 of the courses (participation is optional). One course runs a ringer board over the year, and eight courses reported that they organize different events in conjunction with men’s

night. These events include: monkey golf, number of putts, putting contest, longest and most accurate drive, and closest to the pin.

One respondent gave details on the interesting **putting contest** they organize, which has the potential to grow in value from week to week, and no doubt to increase interest and kibitzing as the pot grows. “Every willing participant gives me a toonie and is eligible to putt for the jackpot. Three names are picked from a hat and they get to putt (15 footer); if one of them makes the putt, he wins the accumulated jackpot, if two, or all three, guys make the putt it's a carry over to the next week; if no one makes the putt it is also carried over. The pot can accumulate to a lot of money. On the last night of the year, everybody gets to putt and everyone who makes the putt goes to the next round. We change the hole and keep going until we get a winner.”

Asked about **organizing other games** such as scrambles, alternate shot, or best ball competitions, the captains noted that in about half of the cases they did no other activities (see Table 7).

Table 7. Other games played on men's night.

No	Scrambles	Alternate shot	Best ball	Other
11	7	2	3	6

Those who reported doing “other” activities reported that they did scrambles, alternate shot, and best ball competitions at other times during the year (such as

holiday Mondays). Other games that are played from time to time are: split sixes, tombstone, team match play, 3-club night, best ball pro-am, and Ryder cup 3-week event at the end of the year. Shot gun scrambles are used for occasional competitions such as the opening and closing nights of men’s night.

A men’s night special is the most common **meal option** for most courses. This is usually arranged in conjunction with the opportunity to order from the regular menu. One course that does not have a kitchen arranges for food to be delivered to meet members’ needs, or uses a BBQ for cooking.

Asked to indicate what they felt were the **most important ingredients for a successful men’s night**, the club captains were pretty consistent on what was important. Five factors stood out: make it fun for everyone; ensure that all levels of players have an equal chance of success; make the scoring system fair and easy to administer; make sure there is good communication to all members about what is happening and when; and make sure you are well organized to avoid delays or confusion.

Other factors that seem to be important to success include: a mechanism to encourage and include guests in men’s night; active participation and

involvement of golf course staff and pros (if appropriate); and catering to specific membership categories if they are a large part of your membership (whether seniors or those with full-time employment). Prizes are also of importance and to make more prizes available several courses have encouraged sponsors to come to men's night by allowing them to play with a guest that night and have a meal. Sponsorship costs seem to range around \$100 per night.

Some of the common **obstacles to success** include: teeing off early and not being part of the group; the development of "cliques" so that the same people play together all the time; all responsibility falling on one person rather than being shared by a committee; having set teams and doing the same thing over and over again; having it too expensive and not having sponsors; and having it too competitive and appearing to be in favour of A players. A few courses also mentioned that senior members prefer to play earlier in the day to avoid having to drive home in the dark, and that more concern for drinking and driving has limited participation to some extent.

All of the captains who replied were extremely generous with their time and suggestions. In a couple of cases, the courses have purchased software to help manage men's night. Two specific products were mentioned (www.golfsoftware.com and www.golfsoftsoftware.ca).