The Spirit of the Game
Ethics in Modern Golf

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Ethics in Golf – Inherent?

The game of golf is unique in that it expects all players to play in the spirit of the game.

Penalties are called upon self, decorum is expected and etiquette is fueled by a strong ethical compass.
What do the Rules State?

• Specifically, the Rules of Golf states the following:

‘All players are expected to play in the spirit of the game by:

Acting with integrity – for example, by following the Rules, applying all penalties, and being honest in all aspects of play.’
What do the Rules State?

‘Showing consideration to others – for example, by playing at a prompt pace, looking out for the safety of others, and not distracting the play of another player.’
What do the Rules State?

‘Taking good care of the course – for example, by replacing divots, smoothing bunkers, repairing ball-marks, and not causing unnecessary damage to the course.’
Finally....

‘You should check to see whether the Committee has adopted a Code of Conduct, as you could get a penalty if you do not follow it.’
Let’s take a look at some examples...

Tiger Woods spits on the green
Bryson DeChambeau
(Putter slam in practice green)
Sergio Garcia (Meltdown in the Bunker) among other events...
JB Holmes (& Others) Slow Play
How about bypassing or using a rule loophole to your advantage?
And still more...
This was just last weekend!
Questions to Consider

- Does the PGA/USGA/R&A have the right to enforce behavior on the course?
How Subjective is Behavior on the Course?
What about ethical issues off the course?
Since golf is a sport in which players are not ‘employed’ by a team (unlike the major 4 sports in the U.S.), does golf have different implied standards for behavior?
Does it matter player to player, case by case basis?

Consider screen time for certain players...
To what degree does golf’s governing bodies have the right to enforce behavior?

What about at the local amateur level?
Final thought: the PGA Tour does not publicly acknowledge violations of its code of ethics, but does report that fines are given to charities.

Does that change any of these answers?