**Top 10 Recruiting Questions**

Coach John Brooks has put together a top 10 most frequently asked questions list to help juniors and parents in their quest for college golf scholarships.  
  
To view the Junior Golf Scoreboard's "Going to College" articles written by AJGA's College Golf Advisors, click [here](http://www.njgs.com/ss_4_start.asp).   
  
Notice: Be aware that NCAA rules referenced in this document focus on Division I bylaws. Details about Division II and Division III bylaws can be found at the following websites: [ncaa.org](http://ncaa.org/) and [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org/). In addition, Prospective Student-Athletes should always consult with the NCAA and the Eligibility Center for any rules questions.



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**1. What are the most frequently asked questions concerning scholarships?**

Understanding how scholarships are awarded can be very helpful throughout the recruiting process. Each coach has to work within the NCAA scholarship limit for his particular sport, division and gender. For example, men’s NCAA Division I golf programs are allowed to award a maximum of 4.5 full scholarships annually. This raises a number of relevant questions.  
  
*Does it make a difference if the student has in-state or out-of-state residency?*  
Yes, golf is an equivalency sport for NCAA purposes. In this case, each student- athlete’s countable athletic aid is divided by his actual cost of education to determine his scholarship percentage or equivalency. If the student-athlete has a higher cost of education (because he is from out of state) then his relative equivalency would be lower. This only applies to public universities that have different tuition rates based on residency. The total equivalencies for a team’s roster cannot exceed 4.5 in men’s NCAA Division I golf.  
  
*Do all men’s NCAA Division I golf programs award 4.5 scholarships annually?*  
No. Just because programs are allowed to award 4.5 scholarships doesn’t necessarily mean they are fully funded or able to offer scholarships. Some NCAA Division I programs, because of institutional philosophy or budget constraints, actually give little to no golf scholarships at all. This is a very good question to ask a coach early in the recruiting process.  
  
*Are scholarships guaranteed for four years?*  
No, although coaches are allowed to award multi-year scholarships, they typically award scholarships for one year at a time. Generally, schools will renew (or even increase) a student-athlete’s scholarship as long as he is academically eligible, makes satisfactory progress with his golf game, and follows team rules. If a student-athlete’s scholarship is reduced or cancelled, he does have the right to appeal the decision to a university committee. In the recruiting process, coaches are now allowed to promise scholarships for four years.  
  
*Is it true that student-athletes may give up a portion of their scholarships to help the coach recruit?*  
Yes. In some cases, an existing collegiate player will relinquish some or all of his scholarship in order to help the team. In this scenario, the coach would then have additional scholarship money available to recruit and may therefore be able to sign a higher-ranked player. Some of the nation’s elite junior players may be awarded full scholarships for their freshman years only and then be expected (or at least asked) to give up a portion of the full scholarship in subsequent years. This is not a common practice, but it does happen occasionally at the elite programs.  
  
*Do coaches award scholarships based on a percentage or on the actual dollar value?*  
The answer is both. In some cases a coach will offer a recruit a percentage of his actual cost of education. If that cost increases due to inflation, the same percentage will apply. Other coaches only award a specific dollar amount to a recruit, leaving him responsible to cover any differences or increases caused by inflation. Programs that are fully funded generally award scholarships on a percentage basis. Those that are not fully funded (especially for budgetary reasons) may elect to award a specific dollar amount only.  
  
*Do nonathletic scholarships count against a team’s NCAA limit?*  
I recommend that student-athletes apply for as many scholarships as possible. In some cases, these scholarships will count against a team’s NCAA limit, and if the program is already at its maximum, the scholarship will have to be declined. In a case where the program has not yet reached its maximum, a student-athlete would be allowed and encouraged to keep an outside scholarship even if it is countable against NCAA limits. Many outside scholarships are non-countable and do not affect a team’s limit. These are generally scholarships that are available to all students and are not awarded by the institution. The NCAA and/or the school you are considering attending can tell you whether or not the scholarship is countable and whether or not you will be allowed to accept it. In no case may a player receive more scholarship money (from all sources) than his actual cost of education. Tuition, fees, books, and room and board define the cost of a full scholarship under NCAA rules.  
  
*Are full scholarships common in the sport of golf?*  
For women’s NCAA Division I golf programs, a fair number of recruits are offered full scholarships. These programs are allowed to award six (6) full scholarships annually. With less demand for these scholarships and more money available to give, it is common to see players earn full scholarships. In men’s NCAA Division I golf, a small number of players may receive full scholarships. These are generally offered to the nation’s most elite junior players and those who are being heavily recruited. A 50 percent scholarship is much more common in men’s golf.

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**2.  How do players verbally commit to schools so early in the process?**

In the past several years, players, parents and coaches have all witnessed a number of significant changes with how the recruiting process works throughout the world of junior golf. The most obvious change has been the rate at which players commit to schools. Many of the top 50 programs have at least one, if not all, of their commitments before the prospects begin their senior year in high school. While this is not true for all recruits, it has become common enough to explore further. How does this happen so early?  
  
NCAA rules allow prospects to visit campuses at their own expense anytime. These campus tours are referred to as unofficial visits and can occur even when the prospect is very young (8th, 9th, 10th grades for example). The main benefit to a prospect making an unofficial visit is the opportunity to meet with the coach. NCAA rules allow coaches to meet with prospects on campus during unofficial visits regardless of the prospect’s age or year in school. This face-to-face meeting is a great way to learn more about the school and golf program, the coach, his interest in recruiting you and how the recruiting process will unfold.  
  
Once in 11th grade, recruits will receive letters and emails from coaches who are interested in recruiting them. This is the first opportunity for Division I coaches to make any contact with a prospect other than sending a one-time generic questionnaire. Phone calls from Division I coaches can only occur once per week after July 1st following the prospect’s junior year in high school. Prospects and their parents, however, are allowed to call coaches anytime. This is a key step in making arrangements to meet with a coach during an unofficial visit. Although Division I coaches cannot return calls prior to July 1st, they do like prospects to call them especially in cases where the prospect is a potential fit in their golf program. In other words, do your homework first before calling a coach. Make sure the prospect has the necessary academic and athletic qualifications to attend the school.  
  
A top junior player who is nationally ranked should arrange several unofficial visits during his sophomore year in high school. Every prospect should visit the school(s) they are interested in. This cannot be over emphasized since it will be four years of their life. During these visits, coaches can offer prospects roster positions and/or scholarships but only in a verbal manner. Official signings occur first in mid-November during the prospect’s senior year in high school. The key is to be proactive and arrange the unofficial visits, especially if letters and emails are being sent from the school during the prospect’s junior year.  
  
A word of caution for anyone who is interested in making an early verbal commitment: THINGS CHANGE! While you may think a school is right for you, what will happen if the coach leaves or your game improves to a level where you could play for a better team? Be slow and careful to make the right decision. Once you give the coach your word, make sure it is final. This is what you should expect from the coach as well.

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**3.  When should junior golfers begin visiting and researching colleges?**

Finding the right college to attend can be an extremely long and complicated process. As student-athletes, junior golfers must identify a school that provides the proper environment for them to succeed both academically and athletically. Knowing when to start this process can ultimately determine whether or not the school they attend is a good fit.  
  
Junior golfers have the benefit of traveling, both regionally and nationally, to tournaments throughout the summer and occasionally during the academic year. In many instances, junior golf tournaments are staged in cities where college campuses are located. In these cases, it is very important that the student and his or her parents take some time during their trip to visit these local campuses. If possible, contact the coach in advance to see if he is available for a brief introductory meeting. NCAA rules allow coaches to meet with prospects and their parents at any time as long as the meeting occurs on campus and the prospect is not yet registered for or participating in a competition. If you call a Division I coach and leave a message, due to NCAA rules you will not get a return call unless it is after July 1st and you are a rising senior. If the coach does not answer the phone, keep calling back. Introduce yourself and let him know you would like to visit his campus one day before or after your tournament. The more campuses you visit, the better your understanding will be with regard to campus size, academic offerings, athletic facilities, student population, and proximity to home.    
  
Oftentimes students will decide not to visit a campus because they have no interest in ever attending that school. Instead these visits can be very productive in helping college prospects better understand exactly what they are searching for in a college. Students can learn something important each time they visit a college campus.

I recommend that families begin visiting campuses as early as 9th grade and no later than 10th grade. These visits can also motivate a young person to work harder in the classroom and on the golf course in hopes of someday participating as a collegiate student- athlete.  
  
Another important step in this process that needs to start early is college research. Junior golfers, along with their parents, should begin to collect as much information as possible on all of the colleges they have interest in attending. www.collegegolf.com and www.golfstat.com are excellent websites to use throughout this entire process. Again, it is important that the initial research begin as early as 9th grade but no later than 10th grade. Students should solicit the assistance of their high school academic advisors to identify and target potential college fits. If the student’s high school has someone specifically designated to assist with college placement, schedule a meeting with him/her early during 10th grade to get a head start on the process. Many people wait until late in their junior year or even during their senior year to think about where they want to attend college. As a student-athlete, you cannot wait this long if you expect to target schools that will be a good fit for you and have roster positions still available. Sometimes rosters fill up a year in advance leaving last minute recruits without an opportunity to play on the team of their choice.  
  
Everyone knows how competitive the college recruiting environment has become. Make sure you have done your homework and visited colleges before being recruited in your sophomore or junior year. It’s never too early to start thinking about where you want to attend college and what to look for in the search.

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**4.  How do college coaches work junior tournaments?**

Most college coaches I know spend at least 25-30 nights per year on the road recruiting. Typically, they will attend 10-12 junior tournaments to watch talented young players practice and compete. This is a perfect forum to evaluate talent.   
  
When you see coaches at a junior tournament, they are generally walking up and down the practice tee or on the golf course following a group as they play. In either case, the coach may be watching for things the player would never dream of.   
  
On the range, coaches are watching juniors very closely to evaluate their technique and general athleticism. They also want to see how the player practices. Is he serious, disciplined, and focused or is he using his practice time to socialize? Does the player pick specific targets, practice his pre-shot routine, and use alignment aids while he practices or does he just hit balls rapidly with no purpose?   
  
On the golf course, coaches are always interested to see how a player reacts to a tough situation. A bad break, an outside distraction, a difficult hole location (bordering on unfair), or a string of lip outs would set the stage perfectly. Coaches want to know that young players can deal with adversity if they are planning to offer them a scholarship or roster position. This ability to deal with adversity sets them apart from other players and shows their high level of maturity. They are also interested to see what personality traits the player displays. Does he walk alone or does he socialize with the other players walking down the fairway? Either can be fine depending on what the coach prefers. Always be yourself in these situations.   
  
Another real world example of how a coach evaluates talent has to do with the player’s presentation. Is the player neatly groomed (haircut, shaven, etc.), are his shoes and clubs clean, and does he look and act like a young professional? These issues matter to all coaches. No one wants to invest time or money in a player who looks sloppy and acts unprofessional.   
  
Finally, all coaches are interested to see how players interact with their parents at tournaments. Is it a pleasant and supportive relationship or are the parents and children constantly arguing back and forth, even during the tournament rounds? Coaches who sense hostility between the player and his parents will typically shy away from recruiting the player.

In the final analysis, score is not the only way to evaluate talent. If this were the case, then coaches would stay at home and recruit via the internet. Pay attention to how you present yourself and how you act at tournaments.

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**5.  Will playing AJGA events increase my chances of earning a college golf scholarship?**

The AJGA is the best place for junior golfers to be discovered by college coaches, plain and simple. But it is not the only place.  The AJGAs Performance Based Entry System (PBE) recognizes tournaments based on their historical strength of field and awards AJGA “status” (Performance Stars and Fully Exempt status) based on a player’s finish. The system has worked well so far and continues to undergo improvements and modifications on an annual basis.  
  
All prospects need to be keenly aware of how the PBE system works in order to plan their seasonal tournament schedules. The AJGA website includes resources that provide details about earning PBE (PBE Map and PBE Charts).  Using these resources, you will realize how many quality non-AJGA events and tours are available to help you reach your long-term tournament goals.   
  
During the fall, winter, and spring months, numerous tours and individual tournaments offer players an opportunity to earn AJGA PBE status. The PBE also includes many non-AJGA summer events. Each State Junior Championship is recognized as well as several national qualifying events such as the USGA Junior Amateur, Junior PGA Championship, Optimist International Junior Championship, and Trusted Choice “Big I” Junior.   
  
Players can also earn status at qualifiers conducted by the AJGA each week of an open event. Along the way, players will build their competitive golf resumes and begin to gain exposure among college coaches. Remember that all tournaments matter to coaches and most tournaments, based on PBE, can help you gain AJGA status.   
  
My suggestion for all prospects is to use the AJGA PBE as a road map to help develop a tournament schedule that will ultimately create exposure for you among several, quality college programs. The AJGA remains an excellent venue for you to achieve your college placement goals.   
  
Start planning today!

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**6.  What is a parent's role in the recruiting process?**

For college-bound student athletes, the recruiting process can be confusing, stressful, and extremely time consuming. Most young people who face this challenging time in their life will look to their parents for sound advice and direction. So what exactly should parents do and not do throughout this complex process?   
  
**THE DO'S:**

·  Encourage your child to properly research colleges and golf programs early in the recruiting process.  
·  Be realistic (academically, athletically, and socially) when helping your child target potential colleges to attend.  
·  Help your child prepare for a successful collegiate career by reflecting on your college experiences.  
·  Speak with parents of children currently attending college to learn more about their respective school and coach.  
·  Prepare a list of questions for your child to ask college coaches during campus visits (see my February 4, 2005 [“Going to College”](http://www.njgs.com/ss_4_archive.asp?passsskID=31)article).  
·  Plan as many unofficial visits as possible during your child’s sophomore and junior years in order to learn more about college campuses.  
·  Keep your child focused on academic excellence throughout high school—including SAT and ACT prep classes.  
·  Remain positive and optimistic throughout the entire recruiting process, constantly reminding your child that you will support their final decision regardless of where they select to attend college.

**THE DON'TS:**

·  When meeting with a coach, refrain from answering questions for your child—let them speak for themselves.  
·  Resist the temptation to tell your child where they should attend college and play golf without asking their opinion.  
·  College questionnaires should be completed by the student athletes, not the parents.  
·  When coaches call your home, they are most interested in speaking with your child — stay off the call unless you are asked to listen in.  
·  During junior golf tournaments (and especially in the presence of college coaches), refrain from showing excessive emotion after each shot your child plays - remain as calm as possible.  
·  Pressuring your child to play better in order to get recruited is unhealthy and in many cases, can be counterproductive.  
·  Parental calls and/or emails to college coaches should be kept to a minimum during the recruiting process.  
·  Overstating your child’s true athletic ability can result in a poor long-term decision and a bad college fit— for both your child and the coach.

Young people need their parents to provide guidance and support at many times during their life, including the college recruiting process. This is generally a stressful time for both the child and the parent as change is on the horizon. Throughout this process, parents need to encourage their children to: (a) think and speak for themselves, (b) do as much research as possible, and (c) ultimately make a personal decision that they are comfortable with.   
  
Coaches are generally hesitant to recruit players whose parents are too involved. Make sure you are not perceived as one of these parents.

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**7.  What is a typical week like in the life of a college golfer?**

The most significant challenge a student- athlete faces in college is how to manage his time effectively. Considering the amount of time that a round of golf requires and the fact that college golf lasts the entire academic year (September-May), college golfers must manage their time effectively if they expect to succeed in the classroom and on the golf course.   
In season, the NCAA allows coaches to mandate a 20-hour weekly practice schedule. This schedule includes golf practice, workouts, meetings, qualifying rounds, and tournament competition. Most golf programs are in season during September and October in the fall and February, March, April, and May in the spring.   
Typically coaches will schedule their off season during November, December, and January. During these months, coaches are permitted to schedule limited practices and workout sessions with their team members.  If the school is located in a warm climate, players will play and practice on their own time.

Most junior golfers have trouble understanding just how busy they will be as a collegiate student-athlete. Freshmen typically struggle with having to balance school, practice, travel, and their social lives all in a seven-day week.

Here is a typical week for a college golfer while in season:

·  Workout three (3) days per week (typically at 6 a.m.)  
·  Attend a minimum of four classes, 2 to 3 times per week (12 hours total)  
·  Participate in evening study hall sessions (mandatory for freshmen)  
·  Meet with tutors or student groups to prepare for class assignments  
·  Practice daily with the golf team (full swing, short game, and qualifying)  
·  Meet with coaching staff to evaluate golf game and set goals  
·  Travel to a tournament for four (4) days (practice round and 54-hole competition)  
·  Cook meals, do laundry, visit with friends, and rest

In season, college golfers have very little free time to spend with friends and to participate in campus activities. The more organized they are in handling their academic responsibilities, the more free time they will ultimately have to socialize and relax. Players on a golf team who are fortunate enough to qualify for the traveling team and participate in tournaments on a regular basis will have the toughest time staying current in the classroom. It is very important for these players to meet regularly with their teachers and tutors in an attempt to get ahead with their class work before traveling to tournaments.   
  
If a junior golfer can learn to manage his time effectively before he enters college, his chances of success increase dramatically. Coaches are very interested in recruiting student-athletes who understand this concept and can handle the transition from high school to college without any problem.   
  
Your time is your most valuable resource. Learn to manage it effectively!

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**8.  Do coaches really care about academics?**

Student-athletes are **students first** and athletes second. Even in nationally competitive programs where there is a lot of pressure to win championships, this is the case. With NCAA initial-eligibility requirements becoming increasingly difficult and new bylaws based on college graduation rates now in place, coaches have to identify junior golfers who can not only help their teams win golf tournaments but can also handle their academic responsibilities. Academics do matter to coaches in the recruiting process.  
  
NCAA initial-eligibility requirements for Division I prospects stipulate that a graduate must pass **16 academic core courses in high school** and have an **SAT or ACT score that meets the Eligibility Center’s sliding scale** before they can compete as a freshman in college. The higher the grade point average is, the lower the test score can be to meet these requirements.  Student-athletes who aspire to participate in athletics at the collegiate level need to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center by the end of their junior year in high school.  They should also review the NCAA’s Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete for more information on this topic.  
  
College golfers miss a tremendous amount of class time due to participation in tournaments. Most tournaments require student- athletes to miss two days of class time. In an average semester, teams will compete in at least 4 to 5 events resulting in nearly 10 days of class absences for each player that makes the trip. These absences can be extremely stressful for students who are not prepared to excel academically or to manage their limited time. **Coaches take this reality into consideration when recruiting junior golfers.** They are well aware of what it takes to be successful at the collegiate level and try to identify excellent players who are capable students as well. As a junior golfer it is very important to stay focused in school by maintaining a high grade point average and by achieving a high test score on either the SAT or ACT. Academic success, combined with a quality golf resume, will help you in the recruiting process.  
  
The NCAA has requirements for college graduation rates. Coaches and their teams are now penalized if their graduation rates fall below the acceptable NCAA standards. This shortcoming can lead to coaches losing their jobs. As a result, coaches are even more focused on recruiting top students to their institutions than ever before. While it has always been important to identify and recruit student-athletes who are committed to earning four-year degrees in college, coaches will work even harder now to make sure they are recruiting players who are focused on graduating before they leave school.  
  
In the final analysis, coaches really do care about academics when recruiting junior golfers. As a result, student-athletes need to understand that they have to balance their time and energy between the sport they love to play and their academic responsibilities. This balance will help their overall marketability when it comes time to being recruited.  
  
**And remember, school should always come first!**

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**9.  Are unofficial visits to college campuses necessary?**

An unofficial visit to a college campus by a prospective student-athlete is a visit made at the prospect’s own expense. There is no limit as to the number of unofficial visits a prospect can make or to how early in the recruitment process the visits can be made. In addition, schools may provide complimentary admissions to an on-campus athletics event during an unofficial visit. Official visits, on the other hand, occur during a prospect’s senior year in high school, are financed by the school, and are limited to no more than five schools.  Official visits are not common in the recruiting process anymore.

During an unofficial visit, Division I coaches are permitted to meet with and speak to prospects and their parents even if the prospect has not yet begun his senior year in high school. This provision in the NCAA Rules allows prospects to meet face to face with Division I coaches early in the recruitment process and to learn more about various schools and golf programs. In cases where the prospect is a highly-recruited athlete, the coach may even present the prospect with a scholarship offer. This has led to more “early commitments” over the past several years and has significantly reduced the number of recruits taking official visits during their senior year in high school.  
  
Junior golfers should always look for schools to visit near golf tournaments they are participating in. If this advice is followed in 9th and 10th grades, prospects will be better prepared to accurately target “good fits” as the college selection process intensifies in 11th and 12th grades. Most young people know very little about how colleges differ and, until they visit the campuses, are unable to select the right school to attend. Unofficial visits also provide an opportunity for prospects and coaches to have face-to-face discussion early on in the recruitment process. Questions should be asked during the visit in order to help with the overall selection process. (See my[February 4, 2005](http://www.njgs.com/ss_4_archive.asp?passsskID=31) “Going to College” article on the Junior Golf Scoreboard that addresses what questions to ask).  
  
To set up an unofficial visit, you should email the coach with the request. Be specific on what you would like to do during the unofficial visit (see facilities, talk with the coach, meet some of the players, tour the campus, etc.) and provide open dates and times. In some cases, the coach and team may be traveling to a competition. If the coach is unavailable to meet, ask for a contact person in either the Athletic or Admissions Departments that could provide the campus tour. If the coach is very accommodating you will know he is sincerely interested in recruiting you. The reverse applies as well. Keep in mind Division I coaches cannot reply to emails prior to September 1st of a prospects junior year in high school.  Sophomores will need to call Division I coaches to arrange campus meetings and may have to call several times before the coach is available and can answer the call.  Division I coaches cannot return a prospect’s call prior to July 1st following their junior year in high school.  
  
Plan your tournament schedule to include trips relatively close to campuses you are interested in visiting. This is an economical and practical way to accomplish multiple tasks during the season. The experience will tremendously assist in the college selection process as well.   
  
Start visiting schools today!

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**10.  Is it a good idea to withdraw after a poor round?**

Everyone who has played the game of golf knows how challenging the sport really is and that consistency is always something to strive for. Furthermore, no one is exempt from having a bad round, especially in competition. Even the greatest players in the world struggle at times and shoot scores in the 80s.   
  
So why is it then that some junior golfers who post high first round scores have a tendency to withdraw from tournaments? Other than being embarrassed for shooting a high score, one might think the player is concerned with how this poor performance will affect his national ranking and eventually his ability to be recruited by college coaches. Keep in mind that there will always be “justified withdrawals” in cases where the player is injured or has a family emergency. The AJGA and other tournament organizations have systems in place to protect a player who withdraws for a legitimate reason. Most would agree that playing poorly is not a legitimate reason and that players should finish tournaments they start.   
  
College coaches pay particularly close attention to those who tend to “manage rankings” by withdrawing from tournaments or “no-carding” after bad rounds. They frown upon these actions and would be less likely to recruit those players. Coaches know that their players will struggle at times in college events and therefore will expect them to have what it takes to manage their games and their emotions in an attempt to shoot the lowest score they possibly can on a given day. Quitting or withdrawing is not an option at the collegiate level.   
  
Instead of withdrawing, junior players who post high first round scores should realize that they have an opportunity to make a great comeback in subsequent rounds. I remember initially recruiting one of the best players I have ever coached immediately after he shot 85- 67 in the first two rounds of a junior tournament in Florida. I had never watched him play before, but once I saw his ability to bounce back from a very poor first round, I knew he was a player I should consider recruiting. He turned out to be an excellent Division I player and someone who demonstrated a lot of character on the golf course, especially in tough situations. He never quit or gave up after a bad start to a round or a tournament.   
  
Parents should always encourage their children to do the best they can and to never let one bad round cause them to worry about how it will affect rankings or college recruiting. Part of the learning process for junior players is to know how to come back after shooting a high score or to deal with adversity during a round. Unless a player is sick, injured, or has an emergency to deal with, he needs to complete the tournament.   
  
And always remember, coaches will be impressed with the player who demonstrates he can bounce back after a bad round!

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