

March Madness is canceled, the NBA is shut down, the Masters is postponed, and my Aunt Marge's senior bowling has even thrown in the towel. Now restaurants and bars are closed, and our 40-handicap governor is threatening to shut down all entertainment facilities including golf courses. I have not tested positive, but the coronavirus is killing me.

There is nowhere to go and nothing to do. My wife suggested we take a walk, but I don't walk anywhere unless I have a golf club in my hand and it's cart path only. My kids have a restraining order on us and won't let us come within 200 yards of the grandchildren. And we can no longer eat out, but when we tried to cook at home, there were cobwebs in the oven.

The network channels are inundated with coverage of the virus. The golf channel has been showing reruns of old tournaments, which are almost as riveting as watching my brother-in-law's video of his family camping trip to Yellowstone. And my wife is so desperate for something to do, she is even considering sex, and maybe even with me.

Paranoia is off the tracks. Before the shutdown, we were having dinner at a local bar. I let out a loud sneeze and everyone at the surrounding tables started yelling "check please." My stock portfolio is plummeting and most of our cash is currently invested in toilet paper. I am washing my hands 137 times a day. I don't touch anyone. I don't even touch myself. I have been using tongs to go to the bathroom. This has to stop.

Our society and economy have been crippled by a microscopic virus. Scientists have not yet determined the exact origin but have narrowed it down to a Chinese fish market or Rosie O'Donnell's bathtub. And no one is sure how to prevent or cure it. In the past, the ways to prevent contracting a contagious disease were simple: don't eat in restaurants with a cat on the menu and don't date my college roommate's sister.

I don't consider myself to be in the high-risk category. I have been building up my immune system by eating one meal per day at MacDonald's for the last 25 years. Germs just slide through me. My only pre-existing condition is an inability to launch a golf ball further than 180 yards. And, according to the CDC, symptoms of the coronavirus are sweats, dizziness, and trouble breathing, which I experience whenever I am standing over a 3-foot putt. I can handle it.

So, I proposed to my regular foursome the idea of escaping from our self-

imposed Stalag 17 and venturing outside for a round of golf. Everyone recognized the danger and severity of the situation. But when faced with the decision to remain sequestered with our wives or to risk contracting a deadly virus, it was a no-brainer. Every man opted to play golf.

Our foursome does not pose a medical risk to mankind. My friend, George is virus-free. Social distancing has not been a problem for him. Other than us, he doesn't have any friends. Bob, my neighbor is a urologist who has been working from home for several weeks. He has developed a way to do remote prostate exams by having patients sit on their cell phones. And our other partner, Jerry tested himself with a kit he bought online. However, he thinks he may have gotten the wrong kit. It showed no traces of the virus but indicated that he was pregnant with twins.

The federal government has established guidelines for social engagement. For example, you must stay at least 6 feet apart and no more than 10 people are allowed at a gathering, which means Patrick Reed's fan club can still meet. In addition, our foursome drafted our own specific set of rules for Pandemic Golf.

Rules of Play:

- • Hazmat suits are permitted. As an alternative, one can wear a college mascot costume or big bunny pajamas.
- • Masks are not permitted, because we would look more like stagecoach robbers than a foursome.
- • Leave the flag in. And to avoid retrieving balls from the hole, any putt shorter than LeBron James is good.
- • Ride in separate golf carts and don't come closer to another player than a fully extended ball retriever.
- • Don't touch another player's balls. This is always good advice.
- • No high fives. Fortunately, we seldom have a reason.
- • No petting the geese or the cart girl.
- • Don't use the spot-a-pot. More disease in there than in all of Wuhan

China.

- No excuses. Slicing or hooking are not side effects of the coronavirus.
- Make an online bank transfer to pay off your bets for the day.
- Straddle the sprinkler on the 18th hole before getting into the car.

These rules and restrictions adequately protected us from contamination. Unfortunately, there is no vaccine for bad golf. I had trouble gripping the club with oven mittens, but it was an enjoyable afternoon which ended way too soon. There were no handshakes on the 18th green, no beers at the bar, and we drove home separately.

As the pandemic plays through, it is giving us a glimpse into our inevitable future where all meals are delivered, all entertainment comes through the tv screen, and all human interaction is through our cell phone. Where schooling is online at home, exercise is on a stationary bike in our basement, medical testing is done at drive-thru windows, and colonoscopies are performed at Jiffy Lube. The world is changing. It is becoming less interpersonal as technology consumes us. So now that we have time on our hands, everyone should take a moment to cherish this fading era, when friends still get together to hit a little ball around an open field for no good reason other than to enjoy the companionship of their fellow man.

Fore,