

Let the Round Begin

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In this article, Hassels explores golf scorecards through CHAT. She relies on her both her antecedent knowledge (of golf) and her antecedent genre knowledge (of scorecards) to help her explain the features of these cards and discusses potential problems that can arise when failures occur in the production and representation of them.

In order to achieve the best score that I can in a round of golf, before every hole I read the scorecard and check to see the yardage, pin placement, the par, and which direction the hole goes in. It was the beginning of the fourth hole at Pottawatomie Golf Course. We were playing a 9-hole match for my high school golf team. It was against one of our rival schools from the town over, St. Charles North High School, one of the best teams in the state. I was playing number one and against the thirteenth best golfer (Gianna) in the state. Before I started the hole, I checked the scorecard as I always did. It was a par three, and the scorecard said the distance to the hole was 112 yards. The wind was blowing slightly, so I decided to use less of a club than I normally would have. I decided to use my 9-iron. First Gianna went up to hit. She hit it considerably far beyond the green. Then I went and also hit it too far; it went in the water. We both hit it about thirty yards past the green. Remembering this event made me think about how much golf scorecards can be understood through cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). In this article, I explain a little bit about golf, important terms that have to do with the sport, and how to read a scorecard. Finally, I explain what I discovered about golf scorecards and how they can be understood through CHAT.

Playing golf for the past fourteen years of my life, I have a lot of antecedent knowledge of the sport. I have also had countless encounters with scorecards, so I have a lot of **antecedent genre knowledge**. Many prior experiences have shaped who I am today and how golf influences my life. Through my previous antecedent knowledge from playing golf, watching golf, and even caddying, I have seen hundreds of scorecards. In golf, the scorecard is important for many different reasons, not only do you keep your score on it, but you also get much information about the course and each hole before you even play from it.

Course Overview: Some Things to Know About Golf

Before going into detail about the scorecard, I think it will be helpful for me to first explain some of the terms used about golf courses and some of the actual rules of golf. Figure 1 is a model of what a hole may look like on a golf course. Let me explain what each of the numbers (1–10) represent in the model. Each hole in golf is different and they all vary. In this particular example though, it shows just about everything a hole in golf *could* include.

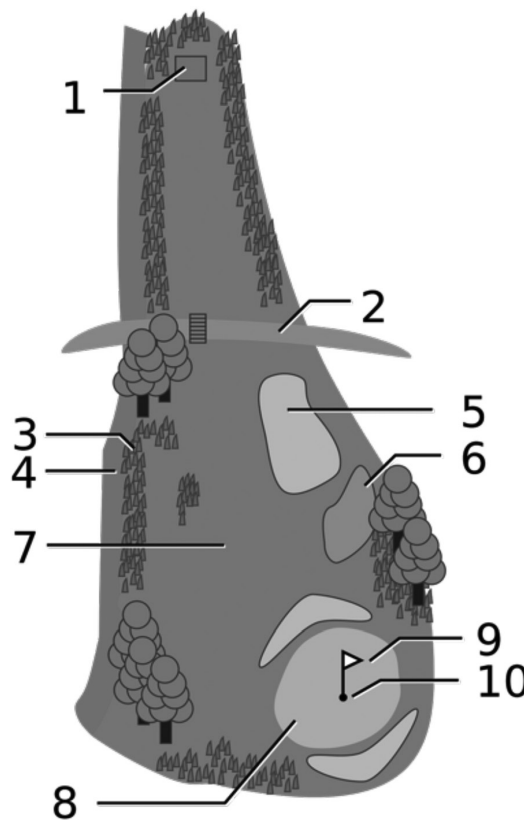


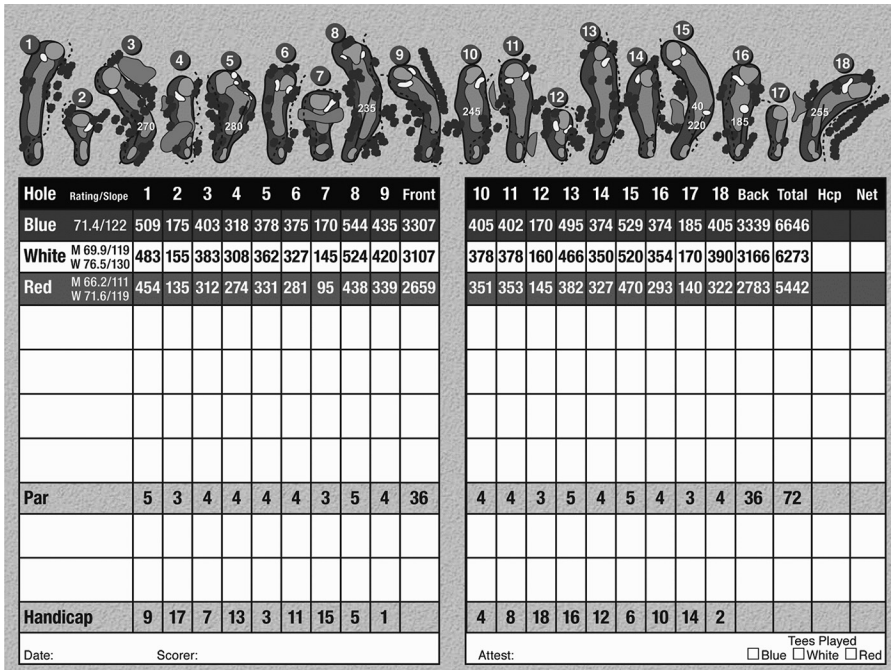
Figure 1: Model of a standard golf hole.

Looking at the model, the number 1 points to the “tee box.” The tee box is where the golfers hit their first shot from. Numbers 2 and 6 are “hazards.” In this case, the hazards are water and if you hit your ball into a hazard, there will be penalty strokes.

Number 3 is the “rough.” This indicates the area where the grass is thicker and can be tougher to hit from. Number 4 shows the “out of bounds,” which is the area you do not want to hit into. Out of bounds can be located all around the hole or not exist at all. Hitting out of bounds also results in penalty strokes. Number 5 is a “sand trap,” that is also considered a hazard but no penalty is included if you hit into the sand. Number 7 is the “fairway,” which points to where you want all your shots to go. The fairway is where the grass is cut the best and is the best location for your ball. Numbers 8 and 9 are the “green,” indicating the ultimate location of where you want your shot to end up. Finally, number 10 is the actual “cup” or hole that you want your golf ball to end up in. You are probably wondering how all of this relates to CHAT, but I promise that I will begin talking about that very soon!

Common Genre Conventions of Golf Scorecards

Figure 2 is an example of a scorecard from Litchfield Country Club and shows what a majority of golf scorecards tend to look like. Models of what



Hole	Rating/Slope	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Front
Blue	71.4/122	509	175	403	318	378	375	170	544	435	3307
White	M 69.9/119 W 76.5/130	483	155	383	308	362	327	145	524	420	3107
Red	M 66.2/111 W 71.6/119	454	135	312	274	331	281	95	438	339	2659
Par		5	3	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	36
Handicap		9	17	7	13	3	11	15	5	1	
Date:	Scorer:										

Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Back	Total	Hcp	Net
Blue	405	402	170	495	374	529	374	185	405	3339	6646		
White	378	378	160	466	350	520	354	170	390	3166	6273		
Red	351	353	145	382	327	470	293	140	322	2783	5442		
Par	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	3	4	36	72		
Handicap	4	8	18	16	12	6	10	14	2				
Date:	Scorer:												
Attest:	Tees Played <input type="checkbox"/> Blue <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Red												

Figure 2: Scorecard from Litchfield Country Club.

each hole will look like will often appear at the top of the scorecards. Notice that these images are similar to Figure 1, just without the labelling. It gives a rough sketch of hazards on the hole, which illustrates any trouble you can get in on that hole, such as trees, water, sand traps, etc. The scorecard then shows the hole number and under that states the yardages (how far it is to the hole) from each tee. On the tee box, there can be several different colored tees. For example, on this particular card in Figure 2, it says Blue, White, and Red. The different colors are based on skill levels with the game. And, while my experience has been that the blue tees are where men play from, the white tees are usually the women's tees, and the red tees are usually where juniors hit from, this isn't always the case. Some golf courses have more than three colored tees, and some golf courses only have one colored tee. Adding more just means the course has more specific guidelines on scoring; the better you are, the farther back from the hole you will play, and the less experienced you are, the closer up you will play. This information is included on the card where it says handicap.

The handicap is a calculated number of how many strokes over par (explained below) a player usually scores. Handicap is something that is not important to most golfers, only very serious golfers have and keep track of their handicaps. The lower the handicap, the more talented you are and the higher your handicap is, the worse or less experienced you are. There are also a range of numbers from one to eighteen on every scorecard that rank each hole—one being the hardest hole and eighteen being the easiest hole. The scorecard also tells you how many yards the hole is from each of the tees for each hole. The last significant thing the scorecard says is the par. Par is the number of strokes a golfer should take to get the ball in the hole. The card states the par for each hole as well as the par for the overall 18 holes. Now that you have a basic introduction to golf and how scorecards are used, let's get back to how this is all related to CHAT!

Connecting CHAT to Scorecards

These particular details about the scorecard and the rules of golf are important for understanding how this relates to CHAT. In CHAT, **production** is anything that goes into making the text. After a golf course is built there are several different websites where you can create templates for the construction of the scorecard. The production of the scorecard is crucial for all golf courses, and as you can probably tell by reading my earlier discussion, so is representation. Without the scorecard, golfers cannot keep track of their score and won't have an idea of how the course is going to be. The nicer the scorecard is, the more detail it will show, and this can

affect golfers in different ways. For example, if the card is lacking details or information needed to navigate the course, this could have an effect on the golfers overall score.

Although I have had many personal examples with this topic, I also have had others tell me about their experience with the issues arising from the production and representation of golf scorecards. While I was telling my golf instructor about this article I was writing, he provided me with a personal example of when he encountered a mistake on a scorecard from a local course he played. The course had recently added a pond to one of the holes, but the card was not up-to-date with this new change. He was hitting his second shot over a hill and could not tell that there was a pond added to the hole. He hit his second shot as he normally would, but when his group got up to the end of the hole, they realized that a pond had been added in the middle of the hole. Not only did they not see the pond, but two out of the four players in his group hit their ball in the pond. This negatively affected their scores and also negatively affected their view on the course.

The production of the scorecard also affects other CHAT terms like representation, reception, and socialization. By looking at the scorecard, you can get a good gist of how the golf course is going to be. There are many things golfers notice when they are looking at the scorecard for a golf course. For instance, as you can see the scorecard example in Figure 3 is not as elaborate as Figure 2. This ties into the representation of the scorecard. **Representation** is how people think about a text and plan it. This scorecard is in black and white and does not include images like the one

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT	P	L	A	Y	E	R	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	Tot
BLUE 72.5/131	345	519	425	202	499	393	186	365	358	3292							389	424	219	520	366	354	538	184	406	3400	6692
WHITE 70.6/128	332	501	401	185	485	363	170	347	339	3123							375	387	189	498	340	330	502	165	386	3172	6295
GOLD 51-65/8 124 1.7-2.4/150	524	478	393	133	475	346	151	316	319	2935							361	358	161	475	333	321	474	135	359	2977	5912
MEN'S HCP	11	3	5	15	1	7	17	13	9								4	12	16	2	14	8	6	18	10		
PAR	4	5	4	3	5	4	3	4	4	36							4	4	3	5	4	4	5	3	4	36	72
RED 71.1/124	317	433	362	110	401	331	130	292	292	2668							326	350	120	401	286	282	405	111	303	2584	5252
LADIES' HCP	13	3	1	7	5	11	17	9	15								10	12	16	2	6	14	4	18	8		
DATE: _____	SCORER: _____										ATTEST: _____																

Figure 3: Scorecard from Flying L Ranch Golf Club.

in Figure 2 did. In my experience, you can usually tell by the scorecard how fancy the course is going to be. You can also usually infer that the nicer, more detailed scorecards are from courses that have more money like golf clubs or country clubs.

There are different websites that people who are making the cards can go on to create scorecards, and of course, there are also many different options and styles for creating them depending on the amount of money you want to spend. There are little details like the thickness of the paper, the coloring, and the length of the scorecard that are all slight features that can mean a lot. From my experience, a standard scorecard looks like the one in Figure 3 and a nicer one looks like the one in Figure 2, but there are even some courses that have even nicer cards than the one in Figure 2. So, based on experience, by looking at the scorecard in Figure 3, I would predict this golf course is not as nice as the golf course from the previous scorecard.

All this information also has to do with representation in a different way. The people creating these cards assume that the people that will be seeing the golf scorecards at these courses are typically people who are very well educated on golf. As you can see, people who do not play the sport probably would have a difficult time understanding the scorecards. The author must consider who the audience is before writing the text. They need to think about who they are talking to. The authors of these scorecards are mindful of who they are writing to; they make the scorecards the way they do because they expect the audience will understand, without additional explanation, what the various components mean (such as the use of color codes for tees or the marking of hazards).

Not only is the visual production and representation of the scorecard important, but the accuracy of the information on the scorecard is perhaps more important. If the scorecard has the yardage wrong or the par is incorrect, this can change everything. Looking at the scorecard before you play and before you begin each hole can benefit you a majority of the time. At other times, it may be a disadvantage if it is hard to read or if something is misprinted. Golfers can sometimes have an advantage over their opponent if they look at the scorecard before the hole and their opponent did not. Golfers will receive the information in a negative way and will receive the information incorrectly if a scorecard is misprinted. This has to do with **reception** in terms of CHAT. Reception is what people do with the text and if they use it in the way that the author intended for them to use it. Just like the story that I mentioned in the beginning, we both hit the ball past the green and the author of the scorecard didn't intend on both of us hitting it that far.

Mistakes are often made on scorecards. Over the past fourteen years I have come across many problems on scorecards. I have seen the par wrong for the hole, and I have seen the yardage printed wrong. In my opinion, the production and representation of the scorecards not only affects the golfer and how they play but can also reflect poorly on the golf course. This ties in with socialization. **Socialization** is not only how someone uses the text but how they talk about the text and interactions people have with the text. When golfers see that something is printed wrong on the scorecard, they will probably talk about it amongst themselves, but also they might mention something to the owners of the course or the clubhouse workers. They might take it further than just talking and decide to write a negative review on the course. From past experiences with a variety of golfers, from caddying for older rich men to playing the sport with girls and boys my own age in tournaments, I know how determined and competitive some golfers can be. Competitive golfers take the sport very seriously, and if something is in the way of their score due to the information on the scorecard, this could really affect how they view that course. Of course, this would also affect players differently depending on the level of competitiveness. If the player was in a match or tournament they might not play the course again after that day. If the player was alone and not really playing very seriously, it might not have a huge impact on their game. Depending on the situation the golfer is in, this might change the way it effects their game.

On the other side of this, socialization can be positive; people may find a scorecard that is very well put together, and they may talk very highly about the course. They might play a course that has a very detailed and good quality scorecard, and unlike the previous scenario, they could write a very good review on the course and play the course more often. In my experience, scorecards have a huge effect on how people talk about the course and the reputation that the course maintains.

End of the Round

My study of golf scorecards explored the rules of golf, important terms, how the scorecards work, and how all these things can be understood through CHAT. In the process of writing this article I discovered how much knowledge is required to truly understand the game of golf. Going into detail about the model of a hole, particular terms, important rules, and everything else I explained in the article really put into perspective how much you need to know about the sport before you play. To research this topic, my background knowledge helped me significantly. Having examples of how scorecards

have affected me personally truly helped me organize and plan this article. Looking at the complexity of scorecards made me realize how significantly CHAT plays a role in the overall process. I found various connections with golf scorecards and antecedent genre knowledge, production, representation, and reception. With my past experiences and background knowledge, it was easy to make connections to the production of scorecards, the representation of the courses, and the reception of the players. The connections I found with golf scorecards and CHAT were interesting. Nonetheless, doing this research made me realize how much actually goes into this sport and how elaborate golf can be. I plan on playing golf for the rest of my life, and from this point on, I will keep in mind how CHAT can always play a role in understanding the aspects of golf and the scorecards.

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