Pitfalls in “Winter Rules”

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A golfer with a more-than-casual familiarity with the Rules of Golf was preparing to play in a club tournament recently and noticed a sign on the first tee: “WINTER RULES.”

Sharpening his needle slightly, he approached the chairman of the golf committee.

“Does that sign mean we can tee up in the fairway?” he asked.

“Oh, yes,” the chairman responded.

“May we place the ball by hand, or should we just move it with the clubhead?”

“Mmmmm... I guess you can place it with your hand.”

“What about moving the ball toward the hole before we tee it up?”

“I don’t know of any limit, but I don’t suppose you should move it much nearer the hole.”

“If I hook a ball into the wrong fairway, can I re-tee up there?”

“I don’t believe we’ve made any decision on that.” The chairman’s face was slowly turning red.

“Can I tee up in the rough? Or in a hazard?”

“Now, look here,” the chairman confessed. “I don’t know what ‘winter rules’ really means. We’ve never studied the question. That’s just a sign the greenkeeper brings out of his shed each fall and posts on the first tee.”

And out on the course half a hundred golfers were playing in a tournament; and no doubt half a hundred different interpretations of “winter rules” were being effected, some leaning backward to take no unfair advantage and some using “winter rules” as a license to cut many strokes from their normal scores.

This situation doubtless is duplicated at many clubs all over the country.

Mrs. William Hockenjos, Jr., President of the Women’s Metropolitan Golf Association in the New York district, became concerned enough about the need to have precise and uniform meaning for the phrase “winter rules” that she queried the USGA Rules of Golf Committee. Her question and the USGA’s point of view follow:

THE QUESTION

No. 48-28 LR

Will you kindly assist our Association in formulating a local rule that will make our “winter rules” play uniform when that condition of play is required by any of our host clubs?

From Mr. Francis’ “Golf, Its Rules and Decisions” recommendations on such a rule to suit our conditions, it would seem the following would adequately cover it but I thought perhaps you would have some further improvements or recommendations:

Where a local rule for preservation of the course is required by the host club, this local rule shall be effective and posted at the starting tee:

“Any ball lying in the fairway or on the putting green, may be lifted, wiped and placed by hand; the ball must be placed as near as possible to the place where it lay and so as to preserve as far as possible the stance required to play from the original lie.”

It will be very much appreciated if you can assist us with an exact wording to cover this situation for we encounter it many times in our tournaments throughout the season, though of course we prefer to play USGA rules wherever possible. The local rules of the clubs are not uniform as to placing or moving the ball under the guise of protecting the ground under repair. Some permit the ball to be placed and others do not. Further, such local rules are not uniform as to preserving the original lie.

MRS. WILLIAM HOCKENJOS, JR., PRESIDENT

WOMEN’S METROPOLITAN GOLF ASSOCIATION

THE ANSWERS

“WINTER RULES” AND “PREFERRED LIES”

The United States Golf Association does not recognize “winter rules” or “preferred lies” in the established Rules of Golf. The Association recommends that the Rules of Golf be observed uniformly. Attention is in-

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vited to the fact that Rule 7(5) ground under repair, and it is that occasional unusual conditions against fair or pleasure which are not widespread be so rately as ground under repair.

The Association recognizes that such adverse conditions are some throughout a golf course, and committees sometimes adopt local “winter rules” for such condition local rules, like all other local rules, which are not established “winter rules.” Without detail it is meaningless for a local com a notice which merely says “Today.”

From our observation, the possibility rule would seem appropriate in question, and it is sug: for the purpose of standardizing “A ball lying in a ‘fairway’ paring surface may be lifted and placed within where it originally lay, not near it: and so as to preserve as near as possible the stance required to play from the original lie. After a ball has been so in play, and if it move after it addressed, the penalty shall be however, it is emphasized that such a local conflict with the established and the fundamental principle of ball as it lies, and the USGA will not endorse and will not interpret.

Scores made in competition under local rule is in force should not handicap.

The section of the Rules of “Recommendations for Local Rules” in part that “When necessary should be made... for the protection of the course.” That is not to be the local rule discussed above. “winter rules” have been under the guise of protecting the site-they conditioned moving ball conditioned parts of the course, divots were promptly taken an injured. Further, such local rules have been permissible, rather tory, so that a player was under to move his ball if he did not w. A local rule “for preservation of must be mandatory and must be details in order to be effective.

EMBEDDED BALL CLEAN

Rule 16 dealing with casual w necessarily applies to an embed. does any other Rule of Golf. The rule does not permit cleaning of generally
Please note that some of the text is not clearly legible or is damaged, making it difficult to transcribe accurately. However, I will attempt to provide the best possible transcription of the visible content.

In the interest of fair and pleasurable play, it is sometimes necessary to adopt local rules to give relief. Thus, on particular days in USGA competitions when conditions warrant, this Association adopts all or part of the following local rules, as may be advisable, but it is emphasized that they are for only particular days and that conditions are reviewed from day to day.

"Local Rules-Applicable Today Only"

"Putting Surface"

"A ball lying on the surface especially prepared for putting of the hole being played may be lifted without penalty, cleaned, and replaced on the spot from which it was lifted.

"On such putting surface, a ball which by force of impact remains embedded in its own pit-mark may be lifted without penalty, cleaned, and placed as near as possible to the place from which it was lifted but not nearer the hole.

"Through the Green"

"Through the green," a ball which by force of impact remains embedded in its own pit-mark may be lifted without penalty, cleaned, and dropped as near as possible to the place where it lay and must come to rest not nearer the hole. See Rule 10(5). A ball may not be cleaned 'through the green' unless so embedded.

"('Through the green' is the whole of the course except the teeing ground, hazards and the putting green. — Definition 3.)"

The foregoing supersedes all previous expressions by the USGA Rules of Golf Committee on these subjects.

Sectional Qualifying for Women

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Miss Helen Sigel played spectacular golf to reach the final, where she lost to Miss Lenczyk, 4 and 3. In the fourth round Miss Sigel was particularly brilliant—she played the first nine of difficult Pebble Beach in 34, four under women’s par, having five 3s in the first seven holes. It was perhaps the greatest nine ever played in the Women’s Championship.

Miss Sigel was runner-up in 1941 as well as this year. Miss Lenczyk, who is 21 years old, first played in the championship in 1946 (Miss Sigel defeated her then in the second round); she was a semi-finalist last year.