

THE REFEREE

Decisions by the USGA Rules of Golf Committee

*Example of symbols: "No. 48-1" means the first Decision issued in 1948.
"R. 14(3)" means Section (3) of Rule 14 in the 1948 Rules of Golf.*

Flagstick: Attending and Removing

No. 48-47. R. 7(7)

Q: As a Scotsman brought up in the tradition that golf is a gentleman's game, I am a little grieved by an idea that seems to prevail that a player has the right to "guard" or "protect" the flagstick when his opponent is making an approach shot, even over his opponent's protest that he leave the flagstick in the hole and move away.

I have even heard it stated that the USGA has ruled that a player has this right. I find this difficult to believe, as I can find nothing in the Rules of Golf to justify it.

If no such ruling has been made, I should like to suggest this addition to Rule 7(5) (Flagstick-1947 rule book):

"A player making a stroke has the right to determine whether the flagstick shall be attended, regardless of the distance from the hole."

JOSEPH FARMER
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

A: Rule 7(7) governs. As the Rules have long provided, the flagstick may be removed by either side at any time; if this were not so, the player might have the advantage of striking an unattended flagstick, and the Rule gives the opponent the right to obviate that possibility. The player then may have the position of the hole indicated to him in the manner stated in the Rule.

If the flagstick is not removed, the player has the right to send his own caddie to attend it while he plays his stroke. In such case, the opponent may not "guard" it, as your question intimates.

Your suggestion is appreciated. It happens, however, that Rule 7(5) of the 1947 code has been amended, and present Rule 7(7) is the result of much consideration.

No. 48-73 Et. (1, 3); R. 7(7)

Q: Regarding Rule 7(7), assume that a player is shooting from 100 feet from the flag. His opponent removes the flagstick. May the person shooting insist that, after removing the flagstick, he leave the green?

B. M. TEMPLE
HOUSTON, TEXAS

A: Not necessarily. The opponent's conduct should be governed by the Etiquette of the Game, especially sections 1 and 3.

Changing Pairings in Stroke Play

No. 48-48. R. 1 (2b), 20(1)

Q. 2: A and B are paired for the qualifying rounds. Between rounds 1 and 2 it becomes obvious that separating A and B would assure final scores of both players that could be more indicative of each man's ability instead of too much good-fellowship. On such cases, I would uphold the committee for breaking such an unfair combination for the second round. Such authority has been questioned.

EDWARD L. SCANLON
PITTSBURGH, PA.

A. 2: Your contention is correct. Players shall start at the times and in the order arranged by the committee—see Rule 20(1)—and in stroke play a committee may, at its discretion, change its own ruling at any time—see Rule 1(2b). The rule of equity is paramount.



Ball Moved: Definition

No. 48-61. R. 12(def.)

Q. 1: A player while addressing his ball on the fairway inadvertently causes it to move out of its original position but it oscillated back into its original lie. Does this movement cause the player to count a stroke, or is a penalty incurred only when the moved ball does not return to its original lie? This often occurs when a club is soled behind a ball on a heavy fairway.

HARRY WINTERS
INGLEWOOD, CAL.

A. 1: Under Rule 12, Definition, a ball is deemed to have moved if it leaves its position and comes to rest in any other place. In the case described, the ball has not moved within the meaning of the Rule, and there is no penalty.

Lifting Ball Without Authority; Cleaning Ball

No. 48-69. R. 10(4), 11(3, 3a, 3c),
14(3), 16; LR

Q. 1: Medal Play—Player away on the green asks the other players to lift and mark balls. Per the rules, this is permissible providing that balls interfere with player. There is no definite statement that restricts the interference to the line of putt, so any ball on the green could be included in a request to lift and mark. The other players lift and mark balls and, because the rules do not say just how a ball is to be held, the players take advantage of that and manage to remove most of the dirt adhering to the ball. They do not clean ball—just manage to get the worst of the dirt off. This procedure continues for the round, thus allowing three men of the four to get rid of most of the dirt. I realize they are evading the rule of honor, etc., but they claim they are staying within the rules as written. Where is the rule at fault or the interpretation as given above?

A. 1: Rule 11(3) and (3a) specifically restrict the purposes for which a ball may be lifted in the circumstances. Further, they give the ball's owner the option of playing first rather than lifting. If a ball be lifted when not authorized by the Rules, the player violates Rule 11(3c) and is penalized two strokes.

In lifting a ball, it is a responsibility of the player to do so in such a manner as will insure that dirt is not removed and the ball not even partially cleaned. A player who fails to use every reasonable care is liable to penalty of two strokes—see Rules 10(4) and 14(3).

Ball Embedded, Local Rule

Q. 2: Casual water rule specifies a temporary accumulation of water but does not say anything about mud or soft fairways resulting from heavy rains. No water is visible but the ball buries. Am I right in saying that the casual water rule applies in any case where a ball buries itself partly—where under ordinary conditions the ball might be expected to bounce or roll? Could this rule be made more specific by a local rule to avoid argument and unfairness? Can a local rule be suggested, or does the rule book cover?

A. 2: Rule 16 gives relief only from casual water as defined in that Rule. It does not give relief in the case of an embedded ball when there is no casual water. If relief is desired, local rules are necessary, and the following are suggested for particular days when conditions justify:

“On a surface especially prepared for putting, a ball which by force of impact remains embedded in its own pitmark 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,’ a ball which by force of impact remains embedded in its own pitmark 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 to the hole. See Rule 10(5). A ball may *not* be cleaned ‘through the green’ *unless so embedded.*”

Questions by W. F. BEBOUT
EAST AKRON, OHIO

Yardage Markers

No. 48-70. Misc.

Q: Many courses have yardage markers in the form of small evergreens, marking 150 or 200 yards down the fairways, or marking a certain yardage to the green. Other courses have signs indicating yardage. What is your opinion of this, as far as influencing a player in determining his play?

MRS. LAWRENCE J. O'TOOLE
CHICAGO, ILL.

A: The Rules of Golf do not prohibit such markers.



Ties in Handicap Tournaments

No. 48-49. R. 3(2)

Q: Is there a USGA rule covering cases of low net ties in 54-hole medal handicap tournaments?

We have been advised that it is not customary to play off ties of this type, but that both (or more) names should be placed on the trophy. In the case of another medal handicap trophy (which may be owned if won three times)—a one-day affair, 18 holes, low net—we require another 18-hole replay. In the 54-hole events there seems no necessity to establish a winner. The consensus is against a three-day replay. Many players feel that any play-off of less than 54 holes would be unfair.

MRS. A. J. WHITMIRE
YPSILANTI, MICH.

A: Rule 3(2) provides that, in stroke competition, a tie or ties shall be decided as and when the committee may determine. It is customary and proper to play off ties. The play-off need not be at 54 holes; it could be at 18. How ties are to be decided should, of course, be determined before the tournament.

Order of Play

No. 48-50. R. 6(1)

Q: While playing a par 3 hole, the question arose as to who should play the next shot. The tee shot of player A landed in a sand trap, just short of the green. Player B was on the green about 25 feet from the hole. Player A failed to get out of the sand trap on his second shot, the ball remaining in the sand trap; however, since the ball was then closer to the hole, Player A contended that inasmuch as Player B was farther away, he was required to take his second stroke.

JOHN J. O'NEILL
FOREST HILLS, N. Y.

A: The ball farther from the hole shall be played first. See Rule 6(1).

Eligibility for Consolation After Default

No. 48-51. Tourn.

Q: A lady was 5 down after the first five holes when a rain came up. She defaulted the match, which was in the first round. Would she be eligible to play in the consolation flight or would she be disqualified from playing any further? If she had never played and defaulted, would she be eligible to play in the consolation flight?

LEONARD OTT
CORAL GABLES, FLA.

A: As the Rules of Golf do not apply, the matter rests with the local committee.

In the first case, it is recommended that the player be allowed to compete in the consolation flight.

In the second case, we consider that the player eliminated herself from further competition.

Unusual Caddies

No. 48-52. Tourn.

Q: Can a lady golfer competing in a tournament have a professional who teaches golf caddie for her.

Can a lady golfer have her husband caddie for her in a tournament?

PAUL SCOTT
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

A: Yes, in each case, unless there is a tournament rule to the contrary. In USGA Championships only caddies attached to the entertaining clubs are allowed to serve.

No Time Limit for Disqualification in Stroke Play

No. 48-53. R. 1(2, 2b), 21(3)

Q: In playing a four-day medal tournament two of the players (on the first day) after holing out on No. 1 green stopped and practiced putting on the 17th green in violation of Rule 20(5).

The violation was not brought to the attention of the offending players (although it was known by the chairman and several of the players), but their signed cards were accepted and entered on the books and day prizes awarded. It was not until five o'clock of that day, after everything had been completed and the players had returned home, that they were told they stood in violation of Rule 20(5) and they faced disqualification.

It was submitted to the Rules Committee and it was voted 2 to 1 that the players be disqualified.

I contend that, inasmuch as the cards had been accepted and day prizes awarded, it was too late for disqualification. I urged the Club in the name of sportsmanship and fair play at least to allow them to continue in the tournament and the outcome to be decided upon after we secured a ruling from the USGA. This also was voted down. Who is right?

MRS. IDA D. BLAKE
ALHAMBRA, CAL.

A: The players violated Rule 21(3) of the 1948 Rules of Golf. The committee was right in disqualifying them. The committee's decision is final—see Rule 1(2). In stroke play a committee may, at its discretion, change its own ruling at any time—see Rule 1(2b); there is no time limit for withdrawing a prize previously awarded.



Champion's Place in Draw

No. 48-55. Tourn.

Q. 1: In a championship tournament where the defending champion is not required to qualify, does she automatically merit the first place in the numerical draw; or does the first place go to the medalist of the day, with the second place going to the defending champion?

MRS. HOWARD BUTTRESS
SAN MARINO, CAL.

A. 1: There is no pertinent Rule. The matter is up to the committee in charge, which should announce its decision in advance. In a USGA match play Championship with a qualifying competition as part of the Championship proper, the last previous winner is not exempt from qualifying, as the event is a test of current ability.