

Ignorance of the Amateur Code

By EDWARD B. LEISENRING

CHAIRMAN, USGA AMATEUR STATUS AND CONDUCT COMMITTEE

A few competitors in this year's Amateur Public Links Championship each accepted a couple of golf balls, without payment, from an over-zealous representative of a golf ball manufacturer.

A USGA investigation disclosed convincingly that neither the players nor the donor were familiar with the pertinent clause in the Rules of Amateur Status. One breaches the Rules (after the 18th birthday) for "Accepting without appropriate payment golf balls, clubs or other golf merchandise from anyone dealing in golf merchandise."

This and several other recent unwitting violations indicate that many amateur golfers need to learn the amateur code. The code appears in every copy of the many thousands of Rules of Golf books issued by the USGA (page 62 in the 1948 edition) and on every entry form for a USGA competition.

With colleges now re-opening, promising young players should note a clause which is new this year. It is aimed against proselyting and athletic scholarships, and it provides that the Definition of an Amateur Golfer is violated by anyone who, after his 18th birthday, because of golf skill or golf reputation, accepts the benefits of a scholarship or any other consideration as an inducement to be a student in an institution of learning.

The advisability of such a rule has been questioned, but it is self-evident that it is in keeping with the Amateur Definition, namely: "An amateur golfer is one who plays the game solely as a non-remunerative or non-profit-making sport."

On the other hand, it is permissible to accept a scholarship won as a *prize* in a recognized golf *competition* before the 18th birthday even though the period of such scholarship may extend beyond the 18th birthday.

With further regard to unwitting violations, a player won an automobile (worth more than \$100) in a hole-in-one contest. He thereby forfeited amateur status.

The event's sponsor contended that it "was not a recognized golf tournament, actually no tournament in any sense of the word, but rather a charity benefit for a wonderful cause."

But the event was played with golf clubs and balls. It was therefore a golf event, and golf skill paid off—it was not croquet or table tennis. And the amateur code prohibits accepting a prize or testimonial of retail value exceeding \$100 or which is readily convertible into money.

Thus, the player has to wait two years before he may be reinstated to amateur status.

A driving range operator gave instruction to some of his patrons. He did not receive direct compensation for it. But who could say that his business did not profit from his great concern for his customers' playing troubles and his instruction of them? Thus, he was ruled not an amateur. The same ruling applies to instruction by an employee as well as an operator of a golf facility.

On the matter of expenses, it bears repeating that a player, after his 18th birthday, may not accept expenses, in money or otherwise, in connection with a golf competition or exhibition (except from one on whom he is normally dependent). That is the basic rule. There are four specific exceptions to it, but they apply only in specific cases, such as Walker Cup and Curtis Cup Matches.

What is the position of a player who, after ceasing to violate the Amateur Rules, has applied to the USGA for reinstatement and is undergoing the two-year probationary period before his application can be considered? The answer is that he is not an amateur until he has been reinstated.

The USGA urges all tournament sponsors to cooperate fully in upholding the integrity of the amateur code. In the long run, it will produce most fun and maximum fair play for everybody.