

Pitfalls in "Winter Rules"

By ISAAC B. GRAINGER

CHAIRMAN, USGA RULES OF GOLF COMMITTEE

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."

"Is there any limit on how far we can move it 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 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 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 dropping the ball or where. It seems that if conditions of mud are permitted to be removed, placing with the hand should be allowed, otherwise, placing with the clubhead would be in order. I have not included the sentence on embedded ball because that seems to be taken care of under casual water free lift, if there has been an accumulation of water temporarily.

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-

vited to the fact that Rule 7(5) provides for ground under repair, and it is recommended that occasional unusual conditions which operate against fair or pleasurable play and which are not widespread be so defined accurately as ground under repair.

The Association recognizes, however, that such adverse conditions are sometimes general throughout a golf course, and that local committees sometimes adopt local rules called "winter rules" for such conditions. Any such local rules, like all other local rules, should be stated in detail and interpreted by the local committee, as there is no established code of "winter rules." Without detailed local rules, it is meaningless for a local committee to post a notice which merely says "Winter Rules Today."

From our observation, the following local rule would seem appropriate for the conditions in question, and it is suggested simply for the purpose of standardization:

"A ball lying in a 'fairway' or on a putting surface may be lifted and cleaned, without penalty, and placed within six inches of where it originally lay, not nearer the hole, and so as to preserve as nearly as possible the stance required to play from the original lie. After a ball has been so placed, it is in play, and if it move after the player has addressed it, the penalty shall be one stroke -see Rule 12 (lb) ."

It is emphasized that such a local rule is in conflict with the established Rules of Golf and the fundamental principle of playing the ball as it lies, and the USGA therefore does not endorse and will not interpret it.

Scores made in competitions where such a local rule is in force should not be used for handicapping.

The section in the Rules of Golf entitled "Recommendations for Local Rules" provides in part that "When necessary, local rules should be made . . . for the preservation of the course." That is not to be confused with the local rule discussed above. All too frequently "winter rules" have been adopted under the guise of protecting the course when, in fact, the practical effect was just the opposite—they condoned moving balls to the best-conditioned parts of the course, from which divots were promptly taken and the course injured. Further, such local rules have invariably been permissive, rather than obligatory, so that a player was under no compulsion to move his ball if he did not want to do so. A local rule "for preservation of the course" must be mandatory and must be specific as to details in order to be effective.

EMBEDDED BALL; CLEANING BALL

Rule 16 dealing with casual water does not necessarily apply to an embedded ball, nor does any other Rule of Golf. The Rules of Golf do not permit cleaning of the ball generally

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 the 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 to 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

Continued from page 7

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.