

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.

Cleaning Ball: Removing Dandelion Blade

No. 48-1. R. 14(3)

Q: The Danish Golf Union a short time ago received an answer from St. Andrews which is in contradiction to one of your decisions mentioned by Mr. Richard S. Francis in his book as R-12-3. Our question was:

"In an open match play tournament (quarter-final), which was played on a newly-mown course just after rain had fallen, a piece of a dandelion blade adhered to a ball with only a small part of the blade sticking out from the surface of the ball. Can such a blade be considered a 'loose impediment' or will removal of the blade be considered 'cleaning of the ball' (not covered by local rule)?"

The answer read as follows:

"The dandelion blade, part of which was sticking out from the surface of the ball, can be considered a loose impediment and could be removed under the terms of Rule 12."

I do not at all understand this answer, which I find is contrary to the general rule that a ball must not be cleaned during the play and as I do not see the difference of an adhering blade and mud and particles adhering to the ball. I would be much obliged if you would send me your opinion.

C. SCHELLER, HON. SECRETARY
DANISH GOLF UNION
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

A: In the absence of a local rule, the removal of the piece of dandelion blade adhering to the ball would, in the opinion of this Association, be a violation of Rule 14(3).

Playing Opponent's Ball in Four-Ball Match

No. 48-2. R. 13(4a)

Q: In a four-ball match, A and C are playing B and D.

B plays A's ball up close to the hole and then strokes the ball into the hole (making two strokes played by B with A's ball). A then goes to play and finds that B has played his ball. No one else in the match made a stroke between the strokes B played with A's ball.

B contends that he may replace A's ball

without penalty, then play his own ball. Is this correct?

JERRY JENTES
NEW YORK, N. Y.

A: No. B is disqualified for that hole as provided in Rule 13(4a). The disqualification does not apply to his partner D. A is entitled to replace his ball in its original position and continue play without penalty.

Embedded Ball: Local Rule Necessary

No. 48-3. R. 10(2), 8; LR

Q: Our No. 8 hole is a par 5, 495 yards. From approximately 350 to 450 yards out, on the left side, drainage is poor so that, after a rain, water lies in the rough for at least a few days, which is naturally casual water. However, at all times a certain amount of mushiness exists so that a high ball may become embedded yet under foot no water is visible. A number of arguments ensue during this condition as to what the correct ruling might be in the event of a lost or unplayable ball.

R. W. HATHAWAY
BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

A: In the absence of casual water and in the absence of a Local Rule covering an embedded ball, the ball must be played as it lies. See Rule 10(2). If the ball is deemed to be lost or unplayable, Rule 8 governs. See also Recommendations for Local Rules.

Concession May Not Be Recalled

No. 48-4. Misc.

Q: If a putt on putting surface is conceded and man misses without acceptance can hole be called?

ERWIN HARDWICKE
DALLAS, TEXAS

A: No. When a concession is made it may not be recalled.

Hazards: Natural Impediments and Artificial Obstructions

No. 48-5. R. 17(1), 7(4)

Q: Please send me the new ruling on what may be lifted before a player plays his stroke in sand traps or hazard.

Some players say they can lift branches and stones out of sand traps.

HAROLD LEE
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

A: Under Rules 17(1) and 7(4), certain artificial objects may be lifted, but natural objects such as branches and stones may not be removed without penalty.

Knocking Away Moving Ball

No. 48-8. R. 1(3), 2(1), 3(1), 12(5c), 15(1), 18(9)

Q: A makes a putt. Ball apparently stops on lip of cup. B decides to knock it away. Before B could hit the ball, it started to drop into the cup and was moving when he finally knocked it away. B acknowledged the ball was moving when he hit it. However, he contends he still was entitled to knock it away, while A thinks he was entitled to the putt. There was no wind or anything to cause it to move other than the grass giving away under the ball. A three-ball match was being played, and all three saw the ball moving as it was hit.

B. A. RHOADES
TRINIDAD, COLO.

A:

A vs. B

1. If B had not holed out, B lost the hole to A under Rule 12(5c).

2. If B had holed out, the rule of equity (Rule 1(3)) must be invoked to prevent injury to A. A's ball had not come to rest after A's last stroke, and A must be given the benefit of the doubt that it would have fallen into the hole. For purposes of possibly applying Rule 2(1)—Penalty Qualified, A cannot be considered to have had a stroke left for a half. Thus, invoking the rule of equity as the primary consideration, it is ruled that:

(a) If B had holed out in more strokes than A had played, B lost the hole to A.

(b) If B had holed out in the same number of strokes A had played, the hole was halved. See Rule 2(1)—Penalty Qualified.

(c) The entire matter is academic if B had holed out in fewer strokes than A had played, as B had already won the hole under Rule 3(1).

A vs. C

As indicated in Rule 12(5c), B was an outside agency with respect to the match between A and C (the third player). Ordinarily Rule 15(1) would apply, but it would obviously be unfair to require A, in his match with C, to play his ball from the place to which it was knocked by B. Rule 1(3) with respect to equity supersedes Rule 15(1) in this particular case, and A is deemed to have holed out at his last stroke.

With respect to Rule 18(9) applying to a ball on the lip of the hole, the following note has been added in the 1948 Rules of Golf:

"Whether a ball has come to rest is a question of fact. If there be reasonable doubt, the owner of the ball may require a momentary delay to settle the doubt. There is

no specified time limit for determining the fact."

Bridge in Hazard: No Relief

No. 48-10. R. 7(4), 17(1)

Q: May a ball within a club-length of a bridge in a water hazard—but not in the water—be moved back in the hazard without penalty? The rule is worded "steps."

OSCAR COOLICAN
WASHINGTON, D. C.

A: No. Parts of bridges and abutments in the confines of hazards are not artificial obstructions under Rule 7(4), and there is no relief therefrom without penalty when a ball lies in a hazard.

"Steps" in Rule 17(1c) of the 1947 Rules of Golf did not mean bridges.

It should be noted that in the 1948 code Rules 7(4) and 17(1) have been revised so as to afford relief without penalty in a hazard from all artificial obstructions except parts of bridges and abutments.

Playing Opponent's Ball: Opponent May Not Elect to Exchange

No. 48-11. R. 13(1a)

Q: In a match in the 1935 Women's Western Championship there occurred an unusual and interesting incident involving the rules that showed Miss Miley's sportsmanship. The drives were about alike, the balls being within fifteen yards of each other in the center of the fairway. Mrs. Atwood, for her second, shot the wrong ball. Miss Miley, as she went to play, saw the mistake, and asked the referee what should be done.

The ruling of Mrs. Raymond, president of the Women's Western Association, was that Miss Miley might claim the hole, or that she might waive the penalty and the hole be played out with the exchanged balls. Without hesitation, the Kentucky girl decided on the latter. Playing Mrs. Atwood's ball, she hooked into a trap, but they ultimately halved in fives.

Was the above decision correct or should Mrs. Raymond have ruled that Mrs. Atwood lost the hole: that it is not permissible to ELECT to play the player's ball and thus cancel the penalty by playing out the hole with balls thus exchanged?

MRS. W. H. SEGRAVE
CLEVELAND, OHIO

A: The decision was incorrect under the current USGA interpretation. The opponent may not elect to play the player's ball; the exchange must be inadvertent. Rule 13(1) of the 1948 Rules of Golf provides in part:

"If a player play the opponent's ball his side shall lose the hole, unless:

"(a) the opponent then inadvertently play the player's ball, in which case the penalty is cancelled, and the hole shall be played out with the balls thus exchanged."

For further qualifications, see Rule 13(1b).

Borrowing Club from Other Than Opponent, Partner, or Fellow Competitor

No. 48-12. Pre.; D. 9

Q. 1: In a team match, Player A, upon reaching the first green, found her putter had been left out of her bag. She putted as well as she could with another iron to avoid "borrowing from her opponent." She continued to putt in this fashion for several holes until they came to a short hole where several matches were delayed. In the general conversation, A mentioned that she had no putter and had been using her No. 2 iron. One of the waiting players said, "I happen to be carrying two putters. I'll be glad to let you have one." A gratefully accepted it. Upon completing play of the next hole, A's opponent claimed the hole and the match, saying A had disqualified herself by using a borrowed club. They agreed to take the matter up with the Team Captain, who immediately called me for a ruling. My analysis was as follows: A had merely added a club but had not exceeded the 14-club limit. I could see little difference in her accepting it from another player on the course than if she had waited until the ninth hole to borrow one from the pro shop or someone's locker. (Being a team match, she was not playing at her own club and only temporary replacement was desired.) I ruled that there had been no infringement and the match should continue.

A. 1: Player A did not violate the Preamble (14-club rule) as she did not carry or use more than 14 clubs and did not borrow from an opponent or a partner.

Q. 2: Suppose the above incident had occurred in stroke play? The club A accepted was not in use by the player who loaned it, yet they would be fellow competitors.

Is the rule meant for the purpose of limiting the player to 14 clubs only, or is borrowing the greater sin?

A. 2: A fellow competitor is the player with whom the competitor plays in stroke competition—see Definition 9. The prohibition in the Preamble against borrowing a club from a fellow competitor would not have applied had the incident occurred in stroke play, as A borrowed the club from a player with whom she was not playing.

Questions by

MRS. ROBERT HURKA
C.W.D.G.A. RULES CHAIRMAN
CHICAGO, ILL.

Scraping Sand on Backswing

No. 48-16. Et. (6); R. 2(1), 17(1), 18(3)

Q. 1: I respectfully request an official ruling on the following decisions of mine based on Rule 17 (Hazards) (1) and (b):

"A player scraping or touching the sand on his backswing in a sand trap does so under penalty of two strokes in stroke play and loss of hole in match play."

This ruling is claimed to be wrong, several pros and others contending that the backswing is part of the act of "striking" the ball. My contention is that the backswing is not part of the act of striking, but is a movement preparatory to the "act of striking" as set forth in Rule 17; otherwise a path in back of the ball could be cleared and the lie of the ball improved, intentionally or otherwise. This would be, as I see it, contrary to one of the fundamentals of golf.

A. 1: Your interpretation of Rule 17(1) is correct. See also Rule 2(1).

Repairing Line of Putt Prohibited

Q. 2: Has there been any change in Rule 18? There has been considerable confusion in this district over a ruling believed to have been made by the PGA whereby a divot hole on the green in the line of putt is allowed to be repaired before putting. Does this have any official sanction?

A. 2: Although Rule 18 has been altered in some respects, there has been no change which would permit a player to repair the line of putt before putting. See Rule 18(3) and Etiquette 6.

Questions by A. D. CRANSTOUN
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

Practice Strokes

No. 48-19. R. 2(3), 13(5)

Q: A and B were playing a match in a tournament. When they arrived at the second hole there were four matches waiting to tee off.

While waiting A took out of his bag about 15 balls and practiced pitching shots, not to the green but to his caddie standing in the rough. He continued to practice until it was time for him to continue play.

Did he violate a rule?

WILLIAM C. HUNT
HOUSTON, TEXAS

A: No. Rule 13(5) does not apply.

It should be noted that, had there been no waiting, the player would have violated Rule 2(3) prohibiting unfair delay in play.

Ball Touching Artificial Obstruction

No. 48-21. R. 7(4)

Q: Please clarify new rule on ball touching obstruction. May ball be moved nearer hole to allow free swing or what? New ruling not clear to me.

GEORGE MACRAE
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

A: Ball touching artificial obstruction as defined in 1948 Rule 7(4) may be lifted without penalty and dropped within two club-lengths of that point of obstruction nearest where ball originally lay, and must come to rest not nearer hole. Similar procedure permitted when swing or stance is interfered with by immovable obstruction within two club-lengths of ball.