
THE REFEREE

Decisions by the USGA Rules of Golf Committee

Example of symbols: "No. 49-1" means the first decision issued in 1949. "R. 7 (3)" means Section 3 of Rule 7 in the current Rules of Golf.

Claims: Time Limit For Making

No. 48-171. D. 1; R. 1 (2a), 2 (2)

Q: In interclub women's team matches, the teams play two-ball twosomes, which makes the interclub play in foursomes. A particular match was all even on the back side on the 17th tee.

This hole measures 175 yards. None of the foursome hit the green. All four chipped on the green from short yardage. The lady with the longest putt, after close scrutiny, announced that it was not her ball. Further examination disclosed that her partner was also about to putt with the wrong ball. The partners had switched balls, although none of the four was sure whether the change in balls had been made on the tee or at the chip shot.

Considerable discussion followed, with none of the four knowing the rule governing and none thinking to get an official decision before proceeding. Anyway, they all agreed to hole out the balls they had chipped to the green. The two offending partners both sank their putts while the shorter putt of the opposition was missed, thus giving the offending side one point. Without further comment or protest, they drove off the 18th tee. On this hole the offending team won one point, which put them 2 up on the back nine, thus squaring the match, as they had been 2 down on the front side. These results were turned in by both team captains, with no immediate comment about the 17th hole.

An hour later a protest was filed by the non-offending team with the Association's Rules Committee.

Under the Rules of Golf covering four-ball play, what right of protest does the non-offending team have? I believe, first, that having condoned the exchange of balls by the offending team, the non-offending team becomes equally guilty and that as a result both teams should have been disqualified under Rule 2 (2); and second, under Rule 1 (2a), unless claim of protest had been made before they teed off on the next, or 18th hole, no later protest could be claimed merely because either or both teams did not know the Rule covering.

HARRY WINTERS
INGLEWOOD, CAL.

A: The match described was a four-ball match (see Definition 1).

The 17th hole should stand as played. A claim to the contrary was not made within the time limit provided in Rule 1 (2a).

It was never established that the so-called "offending team" exchanged balls during the play of a hole; the exchange may have been made on the teeing ground when the balls were not in play. In view of this doubt as to whether a Rule was ever violated, it cannot be held that the players breached Rule 2 (2) pertaining to agreement to waive Rules or penalties.

Unplayable Ball in Stroke Play

No. 49-1, R. 8(2b)

Q. 1: There is quite a difference of opinion regarding Rule 8(2b). In the case of an unplayable ball a number maintain that if it is impossible to play a ball behind the place from which the ball was lifted, they can, under penalty of two strokes, play the ball from the fairway no matter **what distance** it is from the spot where the ball was lifted so long as it is not nearer the hole.

On the other hand, some players maintain that the ball must be teed as near as possible to the spot where the ball was lifted but not nearer to the hole, even if it still be in the rough.

A. 1: Under Rule 8(2b), if it be impossible for a player to keep the point from which the ball was lifted between himself and the hole, he must play his next stroke **as near as possible** at the place from which the ball was lifted but not nearer the hole. The word "impossible" in the Rule refers to inability to keep the point from which the ball was lifted between the player and the hole and to play therefrom; it does not refer to the difficulty of the stroke to be played. There is no limitation on how far the player may go behind the place from which the ball was lifted; the cardinal principle is to keep that place between himself and the hole if possible.

When Lost Ball Meant Lost Hole

Q. 2: Could you inform me if there was ever a Rule that the penalty for lost ball in match play was loss of hole? If so, when was this Rule changed?

A. 2: Yes. This Rule was changed in 1920.

Questions by: CAPT. A. R. FRANCIS
BERMUDA

Four-Ball Stroke Play**WOMEN'S HANDICAP STROKES IN MIXED COMPETITION**

No. 49-2. Hdcp.

Q. 2: Four-Ball Stroke Play, on better-ball basis—In a mixed partner tournament, should the women take their allotment of handicap strokes as they come on the men's card (in other words, on the long course) or on their own course and par on which their handicaps are based? We use this tournament monthly at Baltusrol, and the men and women take strokes as they come on the men's card. Players are not given full handicaps, as 85 per cent seems fairer when club handicaps have a wide range, to 40. I am anxious to try this type mixed tournament for the Association, and handicaps are limited to 25 for the women, but wish your suggestion on how to take the allotment of strokes.

A. 2: The USGA has had no experience with such a form of competition, but we would think that women competitors should take their handicap strokes as they come on the women's score card, as that card represents the course on which their handicaps are based.

Attention is called to the fact that the Rules of Golf do not cover four-ball stroke play. The USGA has therefore never endorsed a method of handicapping for such form, but has suggested the following system (for men) to those interested:

"When on a better-ball basis, the strokes are taken by each player as they come on the card, using full handicaps. On each hole the lower net score of the partners becomes the score for that hole."

NO LIMIT ON HANDICAPS

Q. 3: Four-Ball Stroke Play, on better-ball basis — What difference in handicap limit should be placed on partners in a mixed tournament? What difference in handicap limit for women in a women's four-ball better-ball?

A limit handicap of 15—no more than 15 difference between handicaps — has been used for the mixed. For the women's, a rule that partners' handicaps must total six has been used.

A. 3: The USGA has no recommendations. If handicaps have been computed on a sound basis and if strokes are taken as indicated in Answer 2 above, it would seem unnecessary to place limits on handicaps except perhaps to restrict the size of the field.

BALL STRIKING ANOTHER BALL

No. 49-21. R. 7(8), 12(4c), 21(6)

Q. In four-ball stroke play (better ball basis) and foursome stroke play (not four-ball but alternate shot), is it correct to assume that stroke play rules apply, and therefore Rule 12(4c) applies and not Rule 12(4e)? Also Rule 7(8)?

If the above assumption is correct and stroke Rules apply, would you say it is proper for a committee to post a notice retracting the above penalties in order to speed up play in a tournament? I realize I am asking about a form of play which the USGA does not endorse.

A: (a) Rule 21(6) provides that foursome stroke play shall be governed by the Rules for Stroke Competitions.

(b) Although the Rules of Golf do not provide for four-ball stroke play, the Rules of Golf Committee believes that stroke play Rules should govern. Thus, Rules 7(8) and 12(4c) should apply. As a matter of fact, Rule 11 (3a and b) and Rule 12(4c) should apply to a partner's ball as well as to a fellow competitor's ball.

We would think it improper for a local committee to remit the penalties provided for in Rules 12(4c) and 7(8). Rather than speed play, such remission might cause inconveniences, confusion and delay.

Questions by

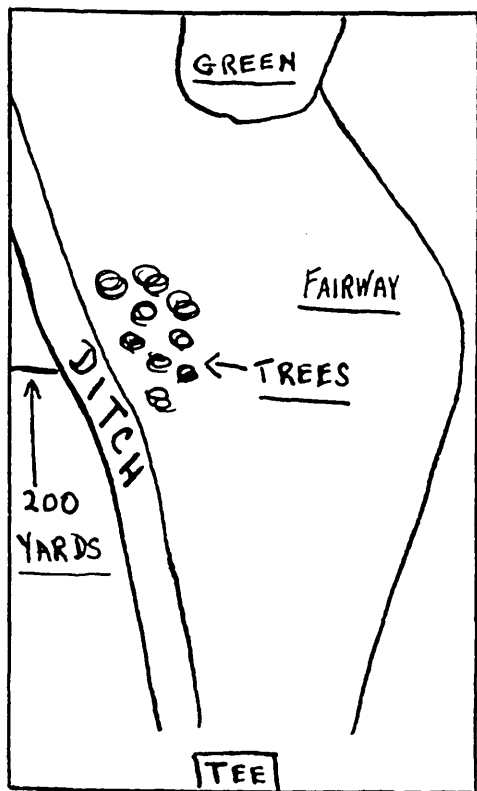
MRS. HOMER LICHTENWALTER
SHORT HILLS, N. J.

**Water Hazard: Local Rule Unnecessary**

No. 49-4. R. 17(2); LR.

Q. Please make a recommendation regarding the penalty for lifting out of a ditch on our 17th hole.

Below is a sketch of this hole. We have always considered the ditch to be a parallel hazard and lift out on the fairway side (penalty—1 stroke) with no limit to the distance the player takes



the ball out into the fairway except that he shall not move it closer to the hole. The player obviously would carry the ball well out so as to avoid the trees on his next shot and we feel that this should not be allowed but don't know what to do about it.

FLOYD CHAPMAN, JR.
St. Louis, Mo.

A: A ditch is a hazard under Rule 17, Definition, but is not necessarily a water hazard unless its nature or a local rule makes it so. If a ball be unplayable in a ditch which is not a water hazard, Rule 8 governs.

It is recommended that the ditch in question be classified as a water hazard. From the sketch submitted, we believe that play should be regulated by Rule 17(2) — the regular Rule for water hazards. Under Rule 17(2a), a ball may be dropped, under penalty of one stroke, behind the hazard so as to keep the spot at which the ball last crossed the hazard margin between the player and the hole.

We do not believe a "parallel water hazard rule" to be necessary in this instance. There might be some justification for it for the first 150 yards of the ditch immediately off the tee,

but thereafter it appears possible to observe the pertinent Rule of Golf, 17(2).

However, should a "parallel water hazard rule" be desired, the following is suggested:

"Hole 17. Ball in parts of water hazard marked by red stakes (or marked 'Parallel Water Hazard') — a ball may be dropped within two club-lengths of either side of hazard opposite point where ball last crossed hazard margin, not nearer hole, under penalty of one stroke."

Lifting in 3-Ball and 4-Ball Matches

No. 49-9. R.11(4), 12(4), (4e), 18(7)

Q. 1: In three-ball or four-ball match play, with all balls on the green within 60 feet and more than six inches from the hole, not playing stymies, the player away plays first; we know he can ask a player in line to lift or putt his ball, but:

(a) Can he ask players nearer the hole to let their balls lie, and not lift them?

(b) If in putting he hits another competitor's ball, does he (the player) lose the hole (1) if he asked the player not to lift or (2) if he did not ask to have the ball lifted?

(c) Does a competitor have a right to walk up to his ball to lift it just as a player away is putting?

(d) Does anyone except the owner of the ball near the hole have any right to lift another's ball and/or concede a putt, and especially as the player away is about to putt?

A. 1: (a) No, not if someone else in the match desires otherwise. See Rule 11(4).

(b) There is no penalty. The moved ball must be replaced. See Rule 12(4e).

(c) No. Under Rule 11(4), the ball must be lifted or played before the player has played his stroke.

(d) The right to lift a ball may be granted only by the owner of the ball and on his responsibility, under circumstances when the Rules permit lifting. A putt may be conceded by an opponent, but it should be done so as not to interfere with the player about to play.

Note—Stymies are played only in single matches. In the cases cited, the distance of the balls from the hole is immaterial.

Lifting in Single Match

Q. 2: What are the answers to the foregoing questions in single match play?

A. 2: The Rules of Golf do not recognize single matches in which stymies are not played. Rule 18(7) governs lifting balls on the putting green.

With regard to question 1(b), Rule 12(4) provides for singles that "... if the player's ball move the opponent's ball, the opponent, if he choose, may drop, or in a hazard or on the putting green may place, the ball as near as possible to the spot from which the original ball was moved, without penalty, but this must be done before another stroke is played by either side".

Questions by: E. B. FREEMAN
NEWTON CENTRE, MASS.

Putter Shaft and Head

No. 49-6. D.4; R. 10(1); F. & M.

Q: A friend of mine uses a putter with a regular head but on which the shaft is fixed to the center of the head vertically from the middle and which he is able to swing between his legs similar to a croquet shot. Is this style of putter according to the Rules or is it a violation? The head is regular in every way but the stroke is taken with a small swing straight between the legs as in croquet. He sinks 8-footers with aggravating regularity!

V. P. LETCHER
ASBURY PARK, N. J.

A: The Rules Governing Form and Make of Golf Clubs provide in part: "The shaft of a putter may be fixed at any point in the head between the heel and a line terminating at the center of the sole". The Association "regards as illegal the use of such clubs as those of the mallet-headed type, or such clubs as have the neck, or shaft, so bent as to produce a similar effect".

The Rules of Golf provide no restriction on the type of stroke played provided the stroke is in fact a stroke and does not conflict with Definition 4 and Rule 10(1).

Ball Striking Opponent's Ball

No. 49-8. R. 12(4).

Q: If your ball hits your opponent's ball at any time, is it optional whether or not he replaces his ball in its original position, and does the distance from which the ball is hit have any bearing?

CLYDE JOHNSON
HOT SPRINGS, VA.

A: In match play singles, it is optional with the opponent as to whether he play the ball where it comes to rest or returns it to its original position as provided in Rule 12(4, a and b).

In a three-ball, best-ball or four-ball match, a ball moved by any other ball

in the match must be replaced—see Rule 12(4e).

In either case, the distance from which the striking ball is played is immaterial.

Referee Attending Flagstick

No. 49-10. R. 2(2), 7(7)

Q. 1: If, during single match play, the players request the referee to assume part of the caddie's duty and attend the flagstick, is this a violation of Rule 2(2) by collusion to waive any penalty incurred if so attended?

A. 1: No. The players' willingness to accept the consequences in such a case is not the kind of agreement which Rule 2(2) contemplates. Should the referee attend the flagstick, despite the injunction in the note to Rule 7(7), he would, as always, be an outside agency.

Prohibiting Attendance of Flagstick

Q. 2: Does player A have the right under Rule 7(7) to require either his caddie or the referee **not** to attend the flagstick while player B plays his shot during a singles match?

A. 2: Yes, in both cases.

Questions by: H. F. RUSSELL
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

Casual Water in Hazard

No. 49-18. R. 7(4), 8, 17(2)

Q. 1: A ball lies in casual water in a sand trap. The only sand not under casual water is nearer the hole. May the player drop the ball, without penalty, into the part of the trap not under casual water even though it be nearer the hole?

A. 1: No. In no case may the player lift the ball without penalty or drop it nearer the hole. The procedure is described in Rule 17(2), which is identical for a ball in a water hazard and in casual water in a hazard. The presence of casual water in a hazard gives such hazard the same status as a water hazard, as far as the Rules are concerned.

No Relief from Fence

Q. 2: The ball is knocked against a fence. The player cannot swing, and the ball cannot be dropped without rolling back against the fence.

A. 2: Rule 7 (4) specifically excludes fences from classification as artificial obstructions, hence no free relief is given. The ball must be played as it lies or be treated as unplayable under Rule 8. Free relief could be given only by a local rule.

Questions by: ROBERT McCOY
ATLANTA, GA.