

It Never Fails!

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The afternoon before the Open Championship at the Medinah Country Club, a member of the USGA Executive Committee was overheard saying to another: "I'll bet you that before Saturday a member of the Executive Committee will have 'laid an egg' and that by six o'clock an unprecedented incident will have occurred."

The second wager was won before noon the next day. For the first time in USGA history, a contestant was playing 3 when he first put his ball in play from the first tee. Why? His late arrival caused unfair delay of other players, and revised Rule 2 (3) with its two-stroke penalty was invoked by the Committee, instead of Rule 20 (1). The penalty under Rule 20 (1) is disqualification. Under amended Rule 2 (3), disqualification could have resulted from a second violation any time during the tournament.

Other Rules were given generous tests during the three days. For instance, the second hole provided ample evidence for the necessity of further studying the provisional-ball rule where water hazards are concerned. This par-3 hole produced a number of 7s and much unavoidable delay because of the length of the water-carry and the extraordinary distance the players had to walk from tee to green. Many balls failed to make the water-carry.

The Long Walk

Rule 19 (e) prohibits a provisional ball for one which may be in a water hazard. Hence, rather than put another ball in play, the players usually elected to take the long walk to ascertain if the first ball were playable. In most such cases it was necessary to return to the tee.

A well-known professional returned and put his second attempt in the water. On his third try, playing 5, he inadvertently



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elected to drop and play from an alternate tee, nearer the water but somewhat to the right of the original tee. Therefore, because he failed to keep the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard between him and the hole, a two-stroke penalty gave the player a 9, after he reached the green and took two putts.

The second green created another problem: With water on two sides and the green otherwise protected by a steep bank with deep grass, it was likely that balls coming to rest behind the green might be played back into the water. In most such cases Rule 17 (2) would have required that the player return to the other side of the lake to play his next stroke, with a penalty stroke added. To obviate this a special ruling provided for application of the unplayable-ball rule, 8 (1), which permitted dropping the ball (or placing if within 60 feet of the hole and not in a hazard) at the place from which it was played into the water, with the usual penalty of stroke and distance.

It is almost impossible to have a tournament without a ball coming to rest in clothing. This time, one landed in the lap of a young lady sitting near the eighth green. In her fright, she arose and the

ball nestled in the corner of a pocket in her coat which had been spread upon the ground. Obviously, the artificial obstruction Rule, 7 (4), was invoked; because the spot was technically on the putting green, that is, within 60 feet of the pin and not in a hazard, the player was allowed to lift the coat and place the ball.

Bobby Locke was the victim of an unusual occurrence. After an extremely long shot from the ninth tee and what appeared to be a perfectly executed second with an iron, the ball came to rest 25 yards short of the green. Noting a peculiar sound when the clubhead came in contact with ball, Locke asked an official to inspect the ball. The official found that the ball gave way under finger pressure, and he therefore declared it unfit for play, allowing substitution without penalty.

Ball Moves—No Penalty

Another prominent competitor found his ball under a leaf in the rough. As he leaned over to remove the leaf, but before touching it, the ball sank in the grass. Question: Was a penalty incurred? No. The player had not taken his stance, nor had he soled his club. Had the leaf, or any other loose impediment within a club-length of the ball, been touched before the ball moved from its position, either horizontally or otherwise, a penalty of one stroke would have been incurred.

For the first time in USGA championship play, gallery stands were erected around the 18th green. They proved far from satisfactory. Although placed at distances which appeared to be out of the playing area, there were instances in practice when play was interfered with. The artificial obstruction rule did not suffice in giving relief. Hence, special regulations had to be devised, and during the tournament they were invoked on a number of occasions. It is doubtful that stands ever will be permitted again.

A flag at the top of a 75-foot pole would seem innocuous enough, but not so in a golf championship where things never fail to be different. At a particular

time each day, for about 20 minutes, the large flag flying above and near the 18th green caused a moving shadow over the 18th cup. In more than one instance the shadow caused a serious case of jitters to a player trying to line up a putt.

An innovation at Medinah was the method of repairing the greens during play. For some time the USGA Executive Committee has been struggling with this problem. The only solution seemed to be in a procedure which sometimes violated the spirit and the letter of Rule 18 (3) prohibiting touching the line of putt. Appeals have been made to players for strict adherence to Section 6 of the Etiquette of Golf concerning eradication of ball holes after holing out; but because so many ignored this simple requirement, the USGA, in order to make play as nearly fair as possible for all, has usually arranged for local green attendants to repair any ball holes as soon as made, and before players reached the green (see Decision 48-178 published on page 21 in the Winter, 1949, edition of the USGA JOURNAL.)

The procedure followed at the 1949 Open contradicts this Decision in that attendants were not permitted to make any repairs until *after* players had completed putting, and then only before the succeeding players had played their shots to the green. Hitherto, it was thought that this method would interfere with play, but, despite confirmation of this in one or two cases, the experiment proved worth while. A continuation of this plan would seem justifiable. If it can be made permanent, the Rules of Golf Committee will be happy that the conflict between championship procedure and daily application of the Rules will have been eliminated.

All Those Divots

*All those divots we have taken
From a somewhat perfect lie
Must have rendered us a service.
Do we cruelly let them die?*

T. G. McMAHON