

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.

Playing without a Marker

No. 48-108. R. 21 (2, 4); Tourn.
Q: During a July Tournament at match play over four weeks, we ran at the same time on one week-end an 18-hole medal play partners' best ball, and permitted scores in the July Tournament to count in the best-ball partnership one-day tournament.

Two players matched against each other in the July Tournament decided to play also and at the same time as a partnership team in the best-ball one-day tournament. Contrary to rules, these two went out and played by themselves. So far as their match play in the July Tournament is concerned, that appeared all right; but I, as Chairman of the Tournament Committee, disqualified them from the one-day best-ball tournament on the grounds that they had no one playing with them to certify their scores.

This partners' best ball tournament was scheduled to be played on either day of a week-end, a Saturday or a Sunday. They played the round on Saturday resulting in their disqualification. They claim they had a right to play it again the next day.

I believe that when you are once disqualified from a tournament, there is no way you can play in it a second time; if we were to allow that, such players would have had two opportunities as against only one for all others. They argue that that applies only when they have been disqualified for an infraction of golf Rules. My answer is that the golf Rules always require in tournament play certification of scores by a player outside the match.

ALBERT DE BEDTS
 NEW YORK, N. Y.

A: Although we are willing to answer inquiries regarding duly constituted events, we must decline to rule on complicated combinations which the Rules do not recognize, as, for example, combining stroke and match play, for which some governing Rules differ. The committee in charge should clearly determine the conditions of such events in advance. It should be noted further that the Rules of Golf do not cover four-ball stroke play.

For guidance, we call attention to Rule 21 (2 and 4) dealing with marking scores in stroke play. A competitor in stroke play who competes without a marker and without the Committee's approval must be disqualified from the entire competition.

Opponent Removing Flagstick

No. 49-15. R. 7(7), (8)

Q: Rule 7(7) states: "The flagstick may be removed by either side at any time." Playing in a four-ball match, my partner was approaching the green outside the 20-yard limit. One of our opponents asked his caddie to handle the flagstick for my partner, whereas my partner wanted to decline the use of the flagstick inasmuch as he was beyond the 20-yard limit. Could we decline the use of the flagstick under this situation, or would we have to accept the decision of our opponent?

GURTH ROBINSON
 KNOXVILLE, TENN.

A: Under Rule 7(7), your opponent was entitled to have the flagstick removed, no matter how far away from the hole your partner's ball was. If this were not so, your partner might have the advantage of striking an unattended flagstick, and the Rules give an opponent the right to obviate that possibility.

If the flagstick is not removed, the player has the right to send his own caddie to attend it while he plays his stroke. The player may not compel an opponent's caddie to attend the flagstick.

There is no so-called "20-yard limit" with respect to striking the flagstick in match play. You probably have this confused with the reference to stroke play in Rule 7(8).

Practice Stroke as Provisional Ball

No. 49-16. R. 1(3), 2(1), 13 (5), 19

Q: Rule 13(5) specifically prohibits a practice stroke with a ball from any teeing ground or during the play of any hole after playing from the first teeing

ground. The penalty is disqualification in stroke play; no penalty is given for match play.

Rule 19 states that a player may play a provisional ball if a ball has been played to a part of the course where it may be lost, unplayable, or out of bounds. Rule 19(c) states that a player is under no obligation to state that he is playing a provisional ball for one of the reasons set forth in this rule.

It seems to me that Rule 19 gives the player a means of violating Rule 13(5) without suffering a penalty. If he desires to play a practice stroke, he can do so, and if questioned about it can merely state that he is playing a provisional ball, which he is entitled to do at any time.

I would appreciate very much having your views on this apparent loophole in the Rules. I realize that it is a situation that will not arise very often, but I dislike seeing a situation where the interpretation of a Rule depends on the player's stated intent rather than on his actions.

HOMER HAGGARD
WILMINGTON, DEL.

A: The penalty for violating Rule 13(5) in match play is loss of hole. See Rule 2(1).

The Rules of Golf are framed on the assumption that golfers play honestly. If a player conformed to the spirit of the first paragraph of Rule 19, he would never play a practice stroke disguised as a provisional ball.

Permission to play a provisional ball is granted by Rule 19 only on the following conditions: (a) when a ball has been played to a part of the course where there is a possibility of its being lost, unplayable or out of bounds; and (b) for the sole purpose of saving time.

Thus, if it should appear that a player were taking unfair advantage of the permission to play a provisional ball, the opponent or the referee (or, in stroke play, the committee) might justifiably claim that the purpose of Rule 19 had not been observed and that a practice stroke had been taken in violation of Rule 13(5). It also might justifiably be claimed that the player breached Rule 2(3) prohibiting delay in play.

Attention is called to Rule 1(3), which provides: "If a point in question be not covered by the Rules of Golf or local rules, it shall be decided by equity."



Measuring Holes

No. 49-13. Par

Q: Would you kindly inform us of the proper manner in which to determine the length between tees and greens? It would seem to us that a ball played on a hilly course would really have to travel farther to attain a certain yardage than on a flat course, as on a flat course the distance would approximate that of air line, while on a hilly course the ball has to be elevated more to cover a given distance, thereby increasing the yardage it has to cover.

M. M. BAMBERGER
UNION, N. J.

A: Each hole should be measured horizontally or along air line (which ever is more appropriate for the particular hole) from the middle of the tee to the center of the green, following the planned line of play. The planned line of play applies to the line contemplated by the architect in laying out the hole and does not necessarily mean a direct line from tee to green. Thus, in a hole with a bend, the line at the elbow point should be centered in the fairway in accordance with the architect's intentions.

The foregoing general principles apply to all types of holes. However, in computing par for a hole, configuration of the ground and any other difficult or unusual conditions should be taken into consideration. See "Directions for Computing Par" in the Rules of Golf booklet.

Committee May Postpone Match

No. 49-19.R. 20 (1); Tourn.

Q: A finalist in the women's club championship had to undergo an emergency operation for appendicitis. I have failed to find a rule covering this, whether the championship should be won by default or if an extension of time can be granted and how much time. Would you advise if there is a rule covering this or, if there is not, would you render a decision for us? The local tournament committee extended the time six weeks. Was this OK?

MIKE M. SWISDAK
OCALA, FLA.

A: Authority to settle the matter rests with the local committee, as it best knows all the circumstances.

It is the committee's responsibility to arrange starting times and to deal with any failure to observe them. Rule 20 (1) provides in part: "Players shall start at the times and in the order arranged by the committee," under penalty of disqualification. The committee was within its powers in postponing the final match six weeks.

Bending Growing Objects

No. 49-22.R. 7(3), Hdcp.

Q. 1: You are not allowed to remove or press down any irregularities of the ground which could in any way affect your stroke, and you must not move, bend or break anything fixed or growing except as is necessary in taking your stance or in swinging.

Does this rule mean that an overhanging branch of a tree or bush can or cannot be bent out of the way before making the stroke, or does it mean that it can be touched only in the process of making the stroke?

A. 1: Rule 7(3) contemplates that there may be some moving, bending or breaking of fixed or growing objects as an incident in the course of taking a fair stance at address and in making the backward or forward swing, and it excuses such incidental movements. However, the Rule prohibits purposeful moving, bending or breaking with the aim of improving the position with the ball. The second exception in Rule 7 (3) condones only such moving, bending or breaking as may incidentally be done in making the swing, but it does not allow such action in order to make the swing.

Tie in Handicap Match

Q. 2: Two men playing a match with a difference of 5 strokes are all even at the end of 18 holes. Should they play another 18 holes, should they play 9 holes, or should they play sudden death, with poorer player taking strokes on holes designated on the score card?

A. 2: Where a handicap match is even at the end of 18 holes, the fairest way is to replay the entire match at 18 holes. If this is not possible for want of time or for other reasons, we recommend that the winner be determined by playing a lesser number of holes which will truly reflect the handicap difference. For example, if A gives B six strokes, one of which comes on the first three holes, the competitors can play those three holes, or, if A gives B 10 strokes, it would be equitable to play nine holes under a handicap allowance of five strokes. It is, of course, a matter for the committee in charge to determine, it knowing all the circumstances and being best able to determine the practical solution. The committee in charge should determine how halved matches shall be decided before the start of the tournament. If unforeseen circumstances prevent application of the foregoing recommendations, the committee should settle the matter equitably.

Questions by: RUSS IVERSON
RACINE, WIS.

Knocking Away Opponent's Ball

No. 49-23.R. 12 (5), 18 (7, 9)

Q: My opponent and I were both on the green. I had a putt of approximately 20 feet, and his putt was approximately 10 feet. I putted and my ball hung on the lip of the cup. My opponent, after a period of approximately 30 seconds to one minute, knocked my ball away.

While he was walking up to knock my ball away, I told him, "Do not hit my ball: I think it is rolling".

My opponent said, "It does not make any difference—I can knock your ball away any time I choose to when it is in my line and it is my putt".

I contended that it was a question of fact whether the ball had stopped rolling or not and it made no difference whether it was his putt or not—I had a reasonable length of time to wait and see if the ball was still rolling.

I later contended after reading the rule book that he was wrong, and that the only time he could knock my ball away was when his was already in the hole and, in knocking my ball away, he was at the same time claiming the hole or conceding a half.

In this particular case my putt was for 3, and when he knocked it away, I, of course, took a 4, and he made his putt for 3.

His point of view is that when it is his putt and my ball is in his line, he can knock it away any time he wants to without giving me a reasonable length of time to see if my ball is still rolling.

S. W. CREEKMORE, JR.
FORT SMITH, ARK.

A: The matter hinges on whether your ball had come to rest. This is a question of fact. Under Rule 18 (9), a player is entitled to a momentary delay to determine whether his ball is at rest. If your ball had not come to rest, your opponent lost the hole under Rule 12 (5) for moving your ball.

If your ball had come to rest within six inches of the hole, your opponent could have required you to lift it under Rule 18 (7) and could have conceded your next stroke. His action in knocking your ball away did not entail a penalty if it were clearly established that your ball had come to rest and was within six inches of the hole. However, as your opponent had not holed out, it would have been better for him to require you to lift your ball as provided in Rule 18 (7).

Your opponent is wrong in contending that he can knock your ball away whenever it is in his line. Stymies are regulated by Rule 18 (7).