

Penalties Cut in British Rules

By BERNARD DARWIN

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On the 20th September at a crowded meeting of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St. Andrews, our new code of Rules was passed by an overwhelming majority and will come into force on New Year's Day.

These rules have demanded considerable work for the past three years, and now that they are safely passed I have resigned my position as Chairman of our Rules of Golf Committee. I am therefore a free man, but I feel that I ought still to write of the Rules as objectively as possible and shall try to do so.

One important point is this: these Rules will now, as far as we are concerned, be the official Rules of Golf, but the Committee suggested what I may call a probationary period of two years, at the end of which any particular Rule may be reconsidered, when it has been seen how it works out in practice.

At the end of that time we may hope for a code that will not need revision for a very long while, and there is one thing that I should like most emphatically to add. This period of two years will give time for the USGA and our Rules of Golf Committee to confer together in the hope of arriving at one uniform code for all the golfing world.

The wish for such a conference has been most cordially expressed by the USGA and as cordially reciprocated by us. I do sincerely trust that it will take place and that it will be fruitful. Personally I can think of no differences that could not be composed by a little give and take on both sides.

Distance Only

Now as to these new Rules, the most important and the most controversial point is the reduction of the penalty for a ball lost, out of bounds or unplayable from stroke and distance to distance only, and some other reductions naturally flowing from this main one.

On that main question the Committee's members were so evenly divided that the Chairman's casting vote might have decided the issue. That was clearly undesirable and I did not give it. Instead, we took a referendum of the members of the Club, that we might have their opinions to guide us, with the result that there was a considerable majority in favor of distance only. Thereupon, whatever our individual opinions, we thought it our duty to adopt the majority's view and reduced the penalty to distance only.

A sense of proportion and a desire for consistency in the Rules thereupon demanded the reduction of other penalties. Briefly, the old penalty of two strokes has disappeared and the general penalty is now one stroke; but this does not apply to anything in the nature of a deliberate defiance of the Rules, such as carrying too many clubs. There has been a hardening rather than a softening in such case.

As regards the unplayable ball, we have for the first time defined it. It must still be ultimately for the player to decide, but we have tried to give him some guidance by declaring that a ball is unplayable if the player consider he cannot make a stroke at it and dislodge it into a playable position. This definition may not be "water-tight"—I doubt if there can be one—but it gives the honest player at least some rule of conduct.

Impediments and Obstructions

A new and rather controversial point is the distinction between "loose impediments" and "obstructions". A "loose impediment" is "any natural object not fixed or growing on the course", while an "obstruction" is "anything artificial erected or placed on the course or anything temporarily left on the course".

The bottle in which the unfortunate

(Continued on Page 8)

Miss Frances Griscom, of Philadelphia, Champion in 1900.

The Championship this year was held on a new pattern. Its success was such that it has been decided to repeat it in 1950.

This plan provided, first, for 36-hole sectional qualifying rounds over two days. They were held in 16 sections; 24 sections were originally scheduled, but there was not enough interest to justify play in all. A total of 192 persons sent in entries; rejections for lateness and withdrawals cut the list to an ultimate 171.

After the sectional qualifying, a field of 128 in the Championship proper at

Merion competed entirely at match play, for the first time; they were paired by a sporting (blind) draw.

During an open meeting of players with the USGA Women's Committee at Merion, player sentiment was slightly over 82 per cent in favor of sectional qualifying.

The 1950 Championship will be planned on exactly the same pattern. As before, entrants must have handicaps not exceeding six strokes.

The USGA is sincerely grateful to women's sectional golf associations which kindly conducted sectional qualifying this year.

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(Continued from Page 5)

Bradshaw found his ball in our Open Championship (in which he tied with Bobby Locke) would, by way of example, be an obstruction and he could, under the new Rule, move his ball without penalty. The same Rule will apply to an obstruction in a hazard, and that is a point on which obviously all will not agree.

We have made an effort to discourage the funereally slow play which is sometimes seen in competition. It is now laid down that the committee in charge shall have power to disqualify any player who in their opinion unduly delays the play of others. We have added a recommendation that this Rule should not be enforced without previous warning.

Further, in order to stop the inordinate and unnecessary lifting of the ball on the putting green in stroke competitions, it is laid down that in stroke play when a ball lying on the putting green interferes with the play of another ball, the ball nearer the hole must be played first.

There are many other minor changes, but I have tried to mention the most important ones.

And now, two final points. First, we have been throughout in consultation

with the governing bodies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, with the Joint Advisory Committee at home (representing the English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Unions) and with the Professional Golfers' Association (British). Secondly, we have borrowed from the United States the layout of the Rules, bringing the Rules for match and stroke play together.

FATHER

"Who's the stranger, Mother Dear?
Look! He knows us! Ain't he queer?"

"Hush, My Own! Don't talk so wild;
That's your father, dearest child."

"That's my father? No such thing!
Father died, you know, last spring."

"Father didn't die, you dub!
Father joined a golfing club."

"But they closed the club, so he
Had no place to go, you see—

"No place left for him to roam;
That's why now he's coming home . . .

"Kiss him, he won't bite you, Child!
All those golfing guys look wild."

—RUSSELL W. HOBSON