

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.

Practice Swing Toward Hole

No. 48-97. R. 7(3)

Q: My committee has been asked to rule as to whether or not a player may take a practice swing in the direction of the putting green on the hole in which he is engaged in play.

I have read Rules 7 and 17 quite thoroughly and find nothing therein that prohibits a practice swing towards the putting green but, as your Rule 7(3) states, a practice swing may be taken any place on the course, etc., and also forbids drawing a club backward and forward across the line of play.

I personally believe that it is a point of etiquette involved rather than a rule not to take a practice swing toward the putting green.

Do these rules mean that a player may or may not take a practice swing toward the putting green?

PAUL L. DEVORE
NEWTON, N. J.

A: Rule 7(3) is explicit. A practice swing may be taken in any direction or at any distance from the ball provided Rules 7 and 17 are not violated. A well-mannered player will take care that he does not come close to violating these Rules.

Not a Hole-in-One

No. 48-98. R. 15(3)

Q: The following quotation will explain an unusual occurrence in connection with a hole-in-one:

"Frederick J. Day of Council Bluffs, playing the third hole of the qualifying round, arched a spectacular tee shot to the green on the 188-yard hole.

"His ball stopped approximately 18 inches from the flag, and a bit to the right of the hole.

"Meanwhile, some unidentified qualifier had let fly a wild slice from No. 5. This ball, in its descent, landed on top of Day's ball at just the proper angle to send it caroming into the cup as Day neared the green.

"Under the rules of golf, Day's shot stands as a hole-in-one and was so reg-

istered on the qualifying score card. He had a 76 for the round."

It is my belief that the tournament official's ruling was incorrect according to USGA Rule 15(3). Can you tell me if this rule is applicable in my case, and, if not, what would your decision be?

FREDERICK J. DAY
COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA

A: The official's ruling was incorrect. Rule 15(3) is specific and your ball should have been replaced as nearly as possible to the place where it lay, without penalty.



Ball Almost Lost

No. 48-101. R. 8 (Def.)

Q. In stroke play, a competitor played a shot from the teeing ground which she did not think could possibly be lost, and therefore she did not play a provisional ball. Upon arriving at the spot where the ball was presumed to have come to rest, it was not readily found. The competitor left the area where the search was being made and started back to play a second ball. She was within a few feet of the teeing ground when the ball was found and the five minutes were not yet up. She returned and played out with her original ball, never having played a provisional ball.

It has been my understanding that once a player leaves the area where her ball is presumed to be lost, regardless of whether the five minutes are up or not, if it is then found she must consider it as lost under the Rules and cannot play it from then on.

If this is not the rule today, was it not a rule about ten years ago?

MRS. RAYMOND S. PATTON, JR.
WEST HARTFORD, CONN.

A: It would be permissible to play the original ball if it were found within five minutes after the player or her caddie had begun to search for it (see Rule 8, Definition), and if the player had not

played a second ball after returning to the tee. Had the player played a second ball prior to the termination of the five-minute period permitted under the Rules for the search, she would be deemed to have abandoned her first ball and would have to continue play with the second ball.

There has been no change in the Rule covering a lost ball.

Ball Striking Opponent's

No. 48-79. R. 12 (4, 4a)

Q: In match play, with both players' balls on the putting green, the player putts and his ball hits the opponent's ball. Is a penalty invoked?

DESMOND A. HARRY
OROYA, PERU

A: There is no penalty. Under Rule 12(4), the opponent has the choice of replacing his ball in its original position (which must be done immediately) or of playing it from the position to which it was moved. See also Rule 12(4a).

Use Current Handicap

No. 48-84. Hdcp.

Q: In playing handicap matches where strokes are exchanged, do you use your latest posted handicap, or do you play the entire match with your handicap as posted on qualifying day, or if paired from the handicap board, that handicap?

MRS. WALTER P. KIMMEL
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

A: A player should use his current handicap when entering a tournament. Generally, a handicap should not be changed during the progress of a competition unless the event extends over a considerable period and the rules provide for handicap adjustment. Such matters should be determined by the committee in charge and its rules should be posted in advance.

Borrowing Partner's Club

No. 48-85. Pre. (14-Club Rule)

Q: In playing a match in the Massachusetts State Mixed Foursomes, our opponents once used each other's clubs for a shot. The lady needed a blaster and her man partner lent it to her. If she had 14 clubs that would theoretically make her use 15. If, on the other hand, she only had 12 or 13 clubs she would be within regulation.

When there are partners (four-ball, best-ball, mixed foursomes or foursomes), can clubs be interchanged between partners?

MISS RUTH WOODWARD
FALL RIVER, MASS.

A: No. The Preamble to the Rules of Golf provides that a player may not

borrow a club from a partner. The penalty is disqualification.

Pushing or Scraping Ball

No. 48-168. R. 2 (1), 10 (1)

Q: Rule 10(1) states that a ball must be fairly struck at—that it must not be pushed, scraped or spooned.

I am unable to find where the Rules state any penalty for not conforming with this Rule. Would I be safe in ruling, as referee, that the penalty would be loss of the hole in match play and two strokes in medal play?

WILLARD M. WHITE
FORT WORTH, TEXAS

A: Yes. Rule 2(1) provides: "The penalty for the breach of a Rule or local rule is the loss of the hole in match play and two strokes in stroke play, except when otherwise specifically provided in the Rules."



Lost Ball Procedure

No. 48-173. R. 2 (1), 8, 17 (Def. 2), 19

Q: 1: Will you kindly explain the conflict between Rule 8 and Rule 19? In Rule 19, "a provisional ball may be played only before the player . . . goes forward", yet in Rule 8 the player "must play his next stroke as nearly as possible at the spot from which the lost or unplayable ball was played."

A: 1: There is no conflict between the basic provisions of Rules 8 and 19.

If the player believes that his original ball may be lost or unplayable, Rule 19 allows him to play a provisional ball immediately, before he or his partner goes forward to search for the original ball. In playing a provisional ball, the player must observe the directions in Rule 8(1) as well as in Rule 19.

If a provisional ball has not been played and the original ball is either lost or unplayable, the player must proceed under Rule 8(1).

Lost Ball Assumed in Hazard

Q: 2: A drove a ball toward a ditch where it disappeared. He dropped a second ball at ditch, counting a penalty stroke, and drove on the green. Upon crossing the bridge, A's first ball was found on the fairway. Must he now play ball No. 1 or continue with ball No. 2? Has he a choice?

A: 2: It is assumed that the ditch was a water hazard. (A ditch is a hazard but is not necessarily a water hazard—see Rule 17, Definition.)

Rule 17 (2) provides in part: "It is a

question of fact whether a ball lost after having been struck toward a water hazard is lost in the hazard or outside the hazard. In order for the player to treat the ball as having been lost in the water hazard and to proceed in accordance with Rule 17(2), there must be reasonable evidence that the ball lodged in the water hazard. In the absence of such evidence the ball must be treated as a lost ball, and Rule 8 applies."

The player's ball was not in the water hazard, and he therefore was not entitled to drop a ball under Rule 17(2a), as he apparently did. He should have treated the original ball as lost under Rule 8(1) and proceeded accordingly. As he did not do so, it is therefore ruled as follows:

Match play — The player lost the hole for failing to proceed as provided in Rule 8 (1)—see also Rule 2 (1).

Stroke play — The player dropped a ball nearer the hole than he should have done under Rule 8(1). In order that he may avoid disqualification for so doing, he should, in equity, be considered to have dropped the ball under option (b) of Rule 8(2). Thus, he should be penalized two strokes and should proceed with the ball he dropped, abandoning the original ball.

Questions by: NORMAN D. MEISNER
DETROIT, MICH.

Ball Resting Against Flagstick

No. 48-177. R. 7 (4, 4a, 7), 10 (5)

Q. 1: Match play. A played his third shot to the edge of the green. B played his second shot and his ball came to rest against the flagstick which was in the hole. B's caddie stepped on A's ball. B removed the flagstick and his ball fell into the hole. Does B get a half?

A. 1: B won the hole, as he holed his second stroke — see Rule 7(7).

Caddie Removing Flagstick for "Leaner"

Q. 2: Match play. A played his third shot to the edge of the green. B played his second shot and his ball came to rest against the flagstick. B's caddie remove the flagstick and the ball fell into the hole. Does B lose the hole?

A. 2: B won the hole, as he holed his second stroke — see Rule 7(7). Under this Rule, the player need not personally remove the flagstick, but may have his caddie or anyone on his side do so.

Greater Part of Ball Below Surface

Q. 3: A player's ball rests against the flagstick but only one-quarter of the ball shows above the surface of the green. Has the player holed out?

A. 3: Yes. As the greater portion of the ball was below the surface of the green and within the area of the hole, the ball was holed. Further, even if re-

moval of the flagstick should pull the ball out of the hole, the player must replace the ball, inasmuch as the flagstick is an obstruction, and a ball moved in removing an obstruction on the putting green must be replaced — see Rules 7(4 and 4a) and 10(5).

Ball Not at Bottom of Cup

Q. 4: A player's ball rests against the flagstick but the top of the ball is half an inch below the surface of the green. The flagstick was of bamboo and had a diameter of less than one inch at the surface of the green, but the joint in the stick being much larger prevented the ball from dropping to the bottom of the cup. Has the player holed out?

A. 4: Yes. See Answer 3.

Questions by: A. B. SUESMAN
ATLANTA, GA.

Lost Ball Penalty

No. 48-176. R. 8 (1)

Q: Although I have repeatedly quoted Decision 48-111 to members of my club in regard to penalty for a lost ball being loss of stroke and distance, I am still getting an argument that a more recent decision stated that the penalty for a lost ball was distance only, just as it is for a ball out of bounds.

I shall appreciate receiving a definite decision in regard to the penalty for a lost ball.

WALTER N. STEELE
MILLBRAE, CAL.

A: The penalty for a lost ball is loss of stroke and distance, and has been so for many years. The Rules of Golf do not condone remission of the penalty stroke or any procedure other than the following provided in Rule 8 (1):

"Except as provided for in Rules 16 (1) and 17 (2), if a ball be lost or be deemed by the player to be unplayable, the player shall play his next stroke as nearly as possible at the spot from which the lost or unplayable ball was played, adding a penalty stroke to the score for the hole."

Handicap Changing During Competition

No. 49-7 Hdcp.

Q. A competition was held by the local golf association on eclectic (ringer) conditions over two days at 18 holes each. One competitor saw published in the paper two days before the competition the name of the person with whom he would be playing and his handicap was published as 16, whereas his recognized club handicap was 18. He immediately procured a letter from the secretary of his golf club, and the day of competition he produced the evidence to the secretary of the golf

association that his club handicap was 18, and the secretary said he would look after it.

He played the first round but nothing was said about the change of his handicap. On the second day when the scores were brought in they took off 16 as the handicap. He again called it to the attention of the secretary and he was advised that the golf association committee had reduced his handicap two strokes and that they had the authority to do so.

The par of the golf course on which the competition was played is identical to that of the course of which he is a member and on which his handicap was based. The golf committee of his club was not consulted, nor was the handicap committee nor the captain of golf of his club. It does not seem proper that this condition should have existed, and I would appreciate your opinion in respect to an authority of this nature changing handicaps without notice and in such an arbitrary manner.

I. DELEVANTE

KINGSTON, JAMAICA, B.W.I.

A: Eclectic contests are not covered by the Rules of Golf.

Generally, a handicap should not be changed during progress of a competition unless it extends over a considerable period and the rules provide for handicap adjustment. Such matters should be determined by the committee in charge and its rules should be posted in advance.

Ringer Tournament: Tie

No. 48-179. Tourn.

Q: A ringer competition ends in a tie. How is the winner determined?

MRS. LILLIAN HEYER
TENAFLY, N. J.

A: The Rules of Golf Committee is not aware of any fair way of playing off such a tie, and therefore recommends that it be decided by lot or that duplicate prizes be awarded.

As ringer contests are not covered by the Rules of Golf, the conditions should be clearly prescribed in advance and interpreted by the local committee.

Burrowing Animal Hole: Evidence re Ball

No. 49-3. R. 7 (6), 8 (1)

Q: One of our local rules states that a ball lodging in crab holes may be lifted without penalty. If you cannot find your ball in the area where it was driven, can you assume that it went down the crab hole far enough that it cannot be seen and can you drop a new ball and play it without penalty?

W. Y. STEMBLER
MIAMI, FLA.

A: Rule 7(6) gives relief for a ball lying in or touching a hole, a cast or a run-way made by a burrowing animal. Your local rule is therefore unnecessary.

It is a question of fact whether a ball is lost in a hole made by a burrowing animal. On occasions when the fact cannot be positively determined, the possibility that the ball may be in a hole made by a burrowing animal is not sufficient; there must be a preponderance of evidence to that effect. Even if the weight of evidence be to that effect and there yet remains the possibility that the ball is not in the burrowing animal hole, the player must strengthen the evidence by searching five minutes for the ball. In the absence of strong evidence that the ball is in the burrowing animal hole, the ball must be treated as lost, and Rule 8 (1) applies.



Local Rule: Committee Must Interpret No. 48-174. LR.

Q: John Doe, in playing the 18th hole, hits his ball across 18th and 1st fairways into river. No. 1 hole has local parallel water hazard rule with a penalty of loss of distance only.

Can John Doe call parallel water hazard rule on hole which he isn't playing?

GEORGE E. FAULHABER
ROCKY RIVER, OHIO

A: The local rule should be interpreted by the committee which put it into effect, as only that committee knows its intention. If the local rule specifically states that it applies only in the play of No. 1 hole, John Doe must proceed under Rule 17 (2).

The USGA does not recommend a loss-of-distance penalty for a local rule covering such a situation. USGA recommendations for local rules for water hazards are contained in the USGA JOURNAL for July, 1948.

If We Drag

*If we drag our spikes while putting,
How can other putts run true?
Let's remember those behind us
Have to use the same greens, too.*

T. G. McMAHON