

THE REFEREE

Decisions by the USGA Rules of Golf Committee

Example of symbols: "No. 48-1" means the first decision issued in 1948. "R. 7(3)" means Section 3 of Rule 7 in the 1948 Rules of Golf.

Repair of Ball Marks on Greens

No. 48-178. R. 18(3, 4)

Q: There appears to be a change in play which I cannot find justified by the Rules and which was not allowed or done before the war. In those days any hole made in the green by a ball pitched to that green was left alone until all players of that group had puttied out. I remember distinctly seeing many players use a chipper instead of a putter because of a hole in the line of their putt. After the players left the green a greenkeeper standing by would repair all holes made by that group.

Starting with the 1948 Los Angeles Open and continuing through the National Open at Riviera, the greenkeeper repaired these holes as soon as made, and before the players who had made them had reached the green. I am personally very much in favor of this but just what rule authorizes it?

My confusion was added to as I was listening to the radio broadcast of the Glendale Open at Oakmont. It was Cary Middlecoff's turn to putt, and in examining his line he found a hole made in the green by some player of a previous group which the local greenkeeper had apparently failed to repair. The broadcaster in describing this said that according to the Rules a player was allowed to repair this hole, which Middlecoff proceeded to do by leveling the spot with a wooden tee and then stepping on it.

Shades of St. Andrews! Are the common people like ourselves allowed to do that during our Sunday play?

COL. STANLEY E. RIDDERHOF, USMC
EL TORO (SANTA ANA), CAL.

A: As part of general course maintenance for promoting fair play, the USGA for its competitions directs the greenkeeping staff to repair ball marks on putting greens as promptly as possible, even if between ball and hole. The marks are usually repaired before the players making them have arrived at the green. If repair were generally withheld until the players holed out, there would be delay and interference to succeeding players. If ball marks were not repaired by the greenkeeping staff, players after holing out might not do so, and putting conditions for players near the end of the field would usually be rougher than for their predecessors.

A player, however, may never repair ball marks on the line of putt, and he may not request a greenkeeper to do so. Rule 18(3 and 4) prohibits a player from touching the line of putt, from placing a mark anywhere on the putting green, and from testing the putting surface by roughening or scraping it.

If a ball mark were so far removed from the line of play that it could not possibly affect subsequent play of the hole, no penalty would result from its repair by the player. We recommend, however, that players avoid the possibility of any question being raised by deferring repair until play of the hole is finished.

Where the greenkeeping staff is not available to make frequent repairs as is done at USGA competitions, players should observe Section 6 of Etiquette, which provides that after the play of the hole is completed the player should see that any ball hole made by him in the putting green is eradicated.

Ball Striking Flagstick in Holing Out

No. 48-128. R. 4(Def.), 7(7), 7(8)

Q. 1: One of the members of our foursome chipped into the cup from a distance less than 60 feet. The pin was unattended and was in the hole at the time. We were playing medal play, and it is my contention that the player making the shot is subject to the two-stroke penalty covered by Rule 7(8). The player who executed the shot claims that he is not subject to a penalty because the ball was holed out.

A. 1: When the flagstick is in the hole, a ball cannot come to rest in the cup without hitting the flagstick and, consequently, the flagstick is struck by the ball before the stroke is ended. It would be impossible for players or a referee to state whether or not the ball had touched the flagstick before entering the cup, and any interpretation of Rule 7(8) requiring such refinement is impractical. The player is penalized two strokes.

Flagstick Held Up During Stroke

Q. 2: In playing from a deep sand trap adjacent to a green, I instructed my caddie to go to the pin and hold up the flagstick and keep it held up while I executed my shot. My opponent insisted that after I had the hole indicated to me, the flagstick should be

returned to the hole before I shot. Please advise if my instructions to my caddie were correct.

A. 2: Rule 7(7) provides that the flagstick may be held up at any time, including during the play of a stroke, to indicate the position of the hole. It may not be held up in the line of play—that is, between the player and the hole—while a stroke is being played—see Rule 4(Definition).

QUESTIONS BY: T. J. CHARLESWORTH
PITTSBURGH, PA.

Knocking Away Opponent's Ball

No. 48-163. R. 11(4)

Q. 1: In a four-ball match, A and B are partners against C and D. All four balls are on the putting green. All lie 2. D, who is farthest from the hole, putts first and sinks the putt. He removes his ball from the hole and moves to the side of the green. A, who is next away, putts and his ball comes to rest on the lip of the hole and he stands over it, waiting, in the hope that it will drop. C, who is to putt next, asks A to mark his ball. A ignores the request.

May either partner C or D knock the ball away, or may it be knocked away only by that partner (D) who has already holed out?

A. 1: Under Rule 11(4), C had the right to request A to lift or play his ball.

There would be no penalty if either C or D knocked away A's ball as their action would produce the same eventual result in substance—that is, they would have conceded A's next stroke.

The action of so knocking away a player's ball is not uncommon in four-ball matches and in no way benefits the side of the opponent who knocks it away; in fact, it usually is simply an act of courtesy in not requiring the player to lift or to play the ball himself. Accordingly, any claim of penalty against C or D would be without basis in equity or sportsmanship, and we would not uphold any such claim.

Singles and Four-Ball Simultaneously

Q. 2: The same four players above are playing their four-ball match. In addition each player is playing every other player an individual match. (This is a form of golf not recognized in the rule book and the proper answer to the question to be posed below probably is "Don't play that kind of golf.")

Where the rules for single match play conflict with the rules for four-ball match play (as, for example, a player's ball striking an opponent's ball on the putting green), do the rules for four-ball match play govern the play?

A. 2: In matches of this kind players should stipulate in advance whether the Rules for Four-Ball Matches or the Rules for single match play will govern any conflict that might arise. In the absence of any such stipulation,

it has been our observation that the Rules for Four-Ball Matches should usually be applied in such cases.

QUESTIONS BY: CHARLES R. GROSS
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Ball on Lip of Hole

No. 48-169. R. 12(5), 18(5, 7, 9)

Q. 1: In a match, my opponent's ball was on the lip of the cup. He thought it was going to drop, but I didn't, so I waited 10 to 15 seconds. I was going to tap it in the hole, and he said he would call the hole on me if I did. I told him I was away and wanted to putt, and I tapped his ball into the hole, conceding his putt. I showed him the rule book, but he said he could have waited as long as he wanted. I told him if it was going to drop it would have dropped within 15 seconds.

A. 1: The matter hinges on whether your opponent's ball had come to rest. This is a question of fact.

If your opponent's ball had come to rest within six inches of the hole, you did not incur a penalty in knocking the ball into the cup. As you had not holed out, it would have been better for you to require your opponent to lift his ball as provided in Rule 18(7).

If your opponent's ball had not come to rest, you lost the hole under Rule 12(5).

Under Rule 18(9), a player is entitled to only a momentary delay to determine whether his ball is at rest. There is no specified time limit.

Actions to Influence Ball

Q. 2: Is he allowed to move from his putting stance after he has putted? I told him he couldn't, as that would help the ball if it were moving because he would be moving the ground near the hole when he walked up to the hole and would also be shielding the ball from the wind.

A. 2: A player is free to move after playing. However, his movements must not be such as to influence the ball into the hole. Rule 18(5) prohibits a player from shielding his ball from the wind.

QUESTIONS BY: MARIO CAEFAGNO
BELLEVILLE, N. J.

Casual Water in "Rough"

No. 48-80. D. 3, R. 16(1)

Q: When a ball is hit into the "rough" in which there is an accumulation of rain water or, as the rule book states, "casual water," and the ball is found in this water, is the player entitled to a lift without penalty?

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A: Yes. So-called "rough" is part of "through the green" (Definition 3), and Rule 16(1) applies.