

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 1949 Rules of Golf.

Ball Marks: Repair After Putting

No. 49-80. Et. 6; R. 18 (3,4)

Q: Some of our leading players contend that a player or anyone in his foursome, under the 1949 USGA Rules, may repair ball marks or depressions made by his own or other balls on the putting green before he putts or completes the playing of the hole.

I have searched carefully the 1949 USGA Rule Book and have been unable to find where such permission is given. At the 1949 Open in Chicago, ball marks on the green were being repaired by men specially designated to do this job. If my memory is correct, this was done after each group of three players had completed the playing of a hole and before the next group played to the green but not in the interval between the alighting of the ball on the green and the playing of the next stroke by the player.

Our association has taken a very definite stand demanding that rounds of golf be played strictly according to United States Golf Association Rules. The writer, who is the secretary, does not want to be out on a limb in regard to rulings.

KENNETH E. HOY
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

A: A player 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.

At USGA competitions ball marks are repaired by the greenkeeping staff. For many years prior to 1949 the greenkeeping staff was requested to make such repairs as promptly as possible, even if between ball and hole (but players were never authorized to do so). However, effective with the 1949 Open Championship, the greenkeeping staff worked according to the following directions:

"Please attend the putting surface of the green assigned to you . . .

When the last putt has been holed in each group, **proceed immediately** to the green and repair ball marks on the putting surface and any damage to the surface around the hole. Do not do any work on the green after any shots have been played to the green . . . Do not under any circumstances do any work at the request of any person except an official wearing a USGA badge."

(The above procedure for repairing ball marks supersedes that described in Decision 48-178).

Point Match: Penalty Interpreted

No. 49-85. R. 12 (5d).

Q: If A and B are partners in a first and second ball playing against C and D and A's ball hits D's caddie, how many points on that particular hole does D lose? Caddie is carrying two bags, C's and D's.

MRS. C. C. KINSEY
SEATTLE, WASH.

A: C and D lose the hole, subject to the exceptions stated in Rule 12 (5d). Although the Rules of Golf do not cover playing for points on a "first and second ball" basis, it seems obvious that C and D lose both points. The fact that C and D shared the services of a caddie is not pertinent.

Parallel Hazard: Local Rule

No. 49-87. R. 17 (2); LR

Q: If a ball be in a parallel hazard and a strip of rough border the hazard, may the ball be lifted and dropped into the fairway or into the rough bordering the hazard?

MRS. L. C. RAECKEL
RICHMOND HEIGHTS, MO.

A: It depends upon the provisions of the pertinent local rule.

The Rules of Golf do not contain

special provisions for so-called parallel water hazards. In the absence of a local rule, Rule 17 (2) applies.

For certain water hazards paralleling the line of play, where it would be impossible or unfair to apply Rule 17 (2a), the USGA recommends a local rule somewhat as follows:

"Hole No. . . .: Ball in parts of water hazard marked by red stakes (or marked 'Parallel Water Hazard')—a ball may be dropped within two club-lengths of either side of hazard opposite point where ball last crossed hazard margin, not nearer hole, under penalty of one stroke."

Bridge: Relief Limited In Hazard

No. 49-89. R. 7 (4b, c)

Q: If a ball lie on a bridge or bridge abutment over a water hazard, how could the player, under "Relief from artificial obstructions" (see Rule 7 (4), either (b) or (c)) lift the ball and place it in the hazard, as near as possible to the place where it lay, in a similar lie and position?

Many rulings have been made that a ball on a bridge over a hazard is in the hazard if within the periphery of the hazard. It could well be that a ball could not be otherwise placed in the confines of the hazard—as, for instance, if there were water from bank to bank. I can find no distinction in the Rules between "hazards" and "water hazards" which would apply to this situation.

IKE S. HANDY
HOUSTON, TEXAS

A: There is no possible way of placing a ball "in a similar lie and position" when it has come to rest on a bridge within the confines of a hazard; consequently, one can only follow the nearest approach to such a procedure. The answer is given on page 13 of the Spring, 1949, issue of the USGA JOURNAL.

Should the hazard be completely filled with water from bank to bank, no relief is possible unless the water is shallow enough to place the ball therein and play it. The equity of the situation is obvious. If the bridge were not there, the ball would be in the water, and the fact that it stops on the bridge would, on many occasions, enable the player to make a shot without taking a penalty.

Ball Strikes Competitor's Bag

No. 49-94. R. 12 (5b).

Q: Mrs. H incurred a two-stroke penalty when her ball struck Mrs. D's bag on an approach shot to the green. The bag was lying beside the green, having been left there by Mrs. D's caddy, who was attending the flagstick at

the request of Mrs. H. Mrs. D contends that it is a rub of the green and no penalty shall be incurred, inasmuch as all are competitors, not partners or opponents. This occurred in a 54-hole medal tournament.

MRS. W. O. DOUGLASS
ST. LOUIS, MO.

A: Mrs. D's contention is correct. There is no penalty; see Rule 12(5b).

Mrs. D's clubs should not have been left anywhere near Mrs. H's line to the hole and Mrs. H should not have played her stroke until the clubs were removed from her line of play.



"Scooter" Permissible

No. 49-108. Misc.

Q: May a player use an "arthritis special" while playing in a tournament? An "arthritis special" is a three-wheeled scooter used largely for delivery purposes by merchants but in this case fitted up with seats that will carry four players. A friend has one and uses it in playing golf to save him the physical effort of walking around the 18 holes.

My opinion is that it could not be used because of the ruling that a player could have no outside assistance during the match. The pro's opinion was that the cart could be used. He raised the question of where you would draw the line between carrying a seat around and having one of these carts.

S. W. CREEKMORE
FORT SMITH, ARK.

A: The Rules of Golf do not prohibit a player from using mechanical transportation on the course, such as an automotive "scooter". The matter is up to the local tournament committee.

Water Hazard Entered from Far Side

No. 49-115. R. 17(2)

Q: Player was in the sand trap to the north of the putting green. He had a bad lie. In coming out of the trap his ball went across the green and into the water hazard on the south.

From where should the player make his next shot?

Some interpret Rule 17 as allowing the player to drop the ball any place on the line of flight he desires, which would allow him to drop within three feet of pin, as ball actually passed within that distance of pin. Others were of the opinion that he could drop it any place in line of flight except on the green.

Some contended he should drop a ball in the sand trap.

WILLIAM O. LEE
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

A: Under Rule 17 (2a), the player should drop a ball **behind** the water hazard, under penalty of one stroke, keeping the last spot at which the ball crossed the margin of the hazard between himself and the hole.

Spectator Says Ball Was Moved

No. 49-119. R. 12 (4d)

Q: I have need for an interpretation of Rule 12 (4c) where play is to a blind green and no player can see the balls come to rest on the green. However, spectators see one ball strike another, the one being near the hole when struck and the other one being near the hole after the striking. A spectator advises the players what happened to the balls. Is Rule 12(4c) effective?

WALTER MOORE SWOOPE
PHILIPSBURG, PA.

A: Rule 12 (4c) relates to a competitor's ball striking a fellow competitor's ball in stroke play when both balls, before one is played, lie on the putting green, as defined in Rule 18. It seems hardly likely that this fits the case described.

Assuming that both balls were not on the putting green, if it can be positively determined that a competitor's ball at rest was moved by a fellow competitor's ball, Rule 12 (4d) applies and the competitor's ball which was at rest must be replaced; the fellow competitor's ball shall be played from where it comes to rest. The committee should consider all available evidence, including that of responsible spectators.



Ball on Bridge over Water Hazard

No. 49-120. R. 7(4), 17 (1e)

Q 1: A player's ball comes to rest on a wooden bridge over a water hazard (a small river about 15 yards wide with water several feet deep) so that the ball is in the confines of the hazard, considering the outer boundaries of the hazard to extend vertically upward. According to R. S. Francis' "Golf, Its Rules and Decisions," 1939, pages 205 to 208, the ball must be played or dropped back under penalty of one stroke. Fair enough, as without the bridge the ball would have been in the water.

Do any of the changes in the 1949 Rules of Golf which now allow relief from bridges and abutments in hazards change the above? My interpretation is that they do not.

A 1: Rules 17(1e) and 7(4) give relief from bridges in hazards. If the player does not play the ball as it lies on the bridge, he has only one course to follow without penalty—that is, as provided in Rule 7(4b or c), the ball may be placed in the hazard, not nearer the hole, as near as possible to the place where it lay on the obstruction and without interference therefrom. Obviously, since the ball is being lifted from an artificial obstruction, it would be impossible to observe the Rule's provision about placing it "in a similar lie and position" in the hazard.

In the case described, the above procedure might require placing the ball in an unplayable position in the hazard, as in water. In such case, if the player does not wish to play the ball as it lies on the bridge, his only other recourse is to drop a ball behind the water hazard under one stroke penalty as provided in Rule 17(2a).

Q 2: When the bridge is provided with a railing, if the ball comes to rest in such a place on the bridge that the railing interferes with the player's backward or forward swing or his stance, would not Rules 17(1e) and 7(4c) permit lifting the ball without penalty and placing it on the bridge as near as possible to where it lay, so that it could be played from the bridge, if desired, without interference from the railing?

A 2: No. If the player desires to avail himself of Rule 7(4c), he must place the ball in the hazard. He is not permitted to select a more favorable location on the very obstruction from which he wishes relief. The principle is the same as in lifting a ball from ground under repair, Rule 7(5), or from casual water, Rule 16. The purpose of each of these Rules is to give relief without penalty from a peculiar condition, but not to give the player freedom to select a better position for the ball while remaining in the presence of the peculiar condition from which he claims relief. For example, in lifting a ball from the putting green under Rule 16(2), the player may not place it in a position which still does not give relief from casual water. The purpose of the obstruction Rule, 7(4), is best served by the limitations described above.

Questions by: A. F. MATSON
CHICAGO, ILL.

Handicap Play-Off: Strokes Unevenly Divided

No. 49-123. Hdcp. Tourn.

Q: In an 18-hole, match-play handicap tournament, A has to give B five strokes where they come on the card, two on the front nine and three on the back nine. At the end of 18 holes, the match is all even. The rules of this tournament provide for a nine-hole play-off on a handicap basis.

Should B receive two and one-half or three strokes on the nine-hole play-off, using the front nine? If B gets three strokes on the nine and the match is all even at the end of the nine and continues on the back nine, will B receive three more strokes or should he receive only two strokes? Would it be feasible to give B two and one-half strokes on the first nine-hole play-off?

FRANCIS E. McARDLE
SILVER SPRING, MD.

A: As the conditions for playing halved matches have been established, the question is one for the local committee to decide.

If the match is to be concluded in accordance with your tournament rules, we believe that B should receive two strokes in the first nine-hole play-off, just as he received two strokes on the first nine of the regular match. If the match remains halved at the end of the play-off, B should receive three strokes for the next nine holes.

However, as an odd number of strokes is involved, it does not seem entirely equitable to play off at nine holes, as the handicap difference would not be truly reflected.

We do not believe that two and one-half strokes should be given to B in the nine-hole play-off, as this would create an entirely different match from that originally played.

Where a handicap match is even at the end of the designated round, the fairest way to determine the winner is to replay the entire match. When this is not possible for lack of time or for other reasons, it is recommended that the winner be determined by lot or 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 determine the winner by playing those three holes, or if A gives B ten strokes, it would be equitable to play nine holes under a handicap allowance of five strokes.

Attention is called to the fact that the USGA Golf Handicap System says in part: "It is desirable to allocate the first

(handicap) stroke to the first nine, the second stroke to the second nine and continue alternating in this manner until the order of taking strokes is established for the full 18 holes."

Penalty Remission Creates Problem

No. 49-142. R. 8

Q: A discussion of rules has come up at the Interlachen Country Club which we would like clarified. The score card states the Rules of the USGA govern all play except when modified by the following (below is quoted Rule Three on the back of the score card):

"Ball lost or deemed unplayable. Drop ball as nearly as possible to spot where lost or deemed unplayable. Count one penalty stroke. Or player may have option of playing another ball from spot where lost or unplayable ball was played. Penalty: loss of distance only (same as out of bounds)."

It has been the practice of some players to play a provisional ball before determining whether or not the other ball is unplayable, then take their choice after determining the position of the other ball. If after hitting the provisional ball the player decides to play the original ball, no penalty is counted. If the provisional ball is in a favorable position and he decides to play it, one stroke penalty is counted.

I contend that if you are playing our modified rules you cannot use USGA Rules which allow you to shoot a provisional ball. Our card clearly states that you play USGA Rules **except** for the modified rules.

I would appreciate your ruling.

E. S. ROTHGEB
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

A: There is nothing in the statement of facts that abrogates Rule 19, permitting a provisional ball for a ball which may be lost, unplayable or out of bounds.

The USGA does not condone remission of any part of the penalty in Rule 8(1) for a ball lost or unplayable. It is discretionary with a player as to whether his ball is unplayable, under Rule 8, and it may sometimes be discretionary with him as to whether his ball is lost—that is, he may purposely look in the wrong location and never find his ball. Where such discretion can enter, it is believed that the penalty should be sufficiently severe to discourage taking unfair advantage.

The case cited is an example of the problems raised by remission of the penalty in Rule 8(1), and we cannot suggest any solution other than restoration of that penalty.