

Changes in the Rules of Golf

By ISAAC B. GRAINGER

CHAIRMAN, USGA RULES OF GOLF COMMITTEE

One of a number of changes in the Rules of Golf which became effective last month has been widely misunderstood. It concerns the water hazard Rule, 17(2).

When your ball comes to rest in a water hazard, you are allowed, under penalty of one stroke, to drop a ball at either one of the following three places:

(a) Behind the hazard, keeping the spot where the original ball last crossed the margin of the hazard between you and the hole.

(b) In the hazard, keeping the spot where the original ball entered the water between you and the hole.

(c) As nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played; if it was played from the tee, you may re-tee.

This year's change simply lets you proceed under option (c) anywhere on the course, under a stroke-and-distance penalty; heretofore you could do that only when the original ball was played from the tee. Thus, the revised option (c) is identical with procedure and penalty for a ball lost or unplayable elsewhere than in a water hazard—see Rule 8(1).

Provisional Ball Extended

This simple amendment of the Rules has made it possible to permit a provisional ball for a ball which may be in a water hazard—something the Rules did not previously allow.

Under 1950 Rule 19, if you consider that your ball may be lost, unplayable, out of bounds, or in a water hazard, you may (in order to save time) immediately play another ball provisionally from the spot where you played the first one. You are not obliged to state the reason for which you play the provisional ball.

As before, you may play the provisional ball until you reach the place where the original ball is likely to be. Then you have to make your choice—either you play the original ball (in which case there is no penalty) or you

keep on with the provisional ball, under the appropriate penalty—that is, stroke and distance for ball lost, unplayable or in a water hazard, and distance only for ball out of bounds. Once you make your choice, you must retire the other ball.

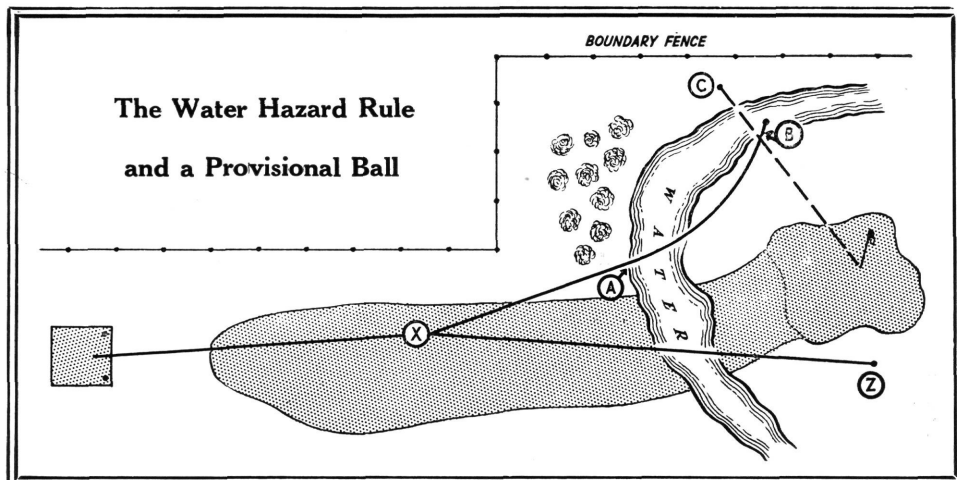
If, for example, your original ball is in a water hazard, you may play it as it lies in the hazard or you may abandon it and keep on with your provisional ball. But you can't abandon the provisional ball also without paying a penalty; once you play a provisional ball and find the original ball in a water hazard, you are precluded from exercising options (a) and (b), described in Rule 17(2), because you have already exercised option (c).

There's one little qualification to that. If your provisional ball is also in a water hazard, along with your abandoned original ball, the provisional ball becomes a ball in play for purposes of scoring and Rules procedure. In that case, you may start all over again to exercise any one of the three options in Rule 17(2), using the former provisional ball as a base.

As a practical matter, in most cases if there's a chance that your original ball is in a water hazard, it still is to your advantage to ascertain its situation before you do anything else. Then, if you discover it's in a water hazard and you have not played a provisional ball, you can proceed under option (a) or (b)—and that usually will mean no appreciable loss of distance besides the penalty stroke.

How to Obtain Rules Books

The 1950 edition of the USGA Rules of Golf booklet may be obtained from the Association's office, 73 East 57th St., New York 22, N.Y. The price is 15 cents a copy, regardless of quantity.



The second shot is played from X toward the left, crossing the water hazard margin at A and B. It may be lost, unplayable, out of bounds or in the water hazard. The player may play a provisional ball from X. But he does not, knowing that if his original ball is lost or unplayable in the water hazard he will be obliged to continue with the provisional ball.

The player searches for his ball and finds it in a water hazard, in a difficult lie. B is the spot where the ball LAST crossed the margin of the hazard. The player therefore drops a ball, under penalty of one stroke, so as to keep B between himself and the hole—as provided in Rule 17(2a). C is the place he selects to drop. (A is not the spot to be kept between the player and the hole, as it was not the LAST point at which the ball crossed the hazard margin.) From C he plays onto the green with his fourth stroke.

Suppose he had played a provisional ball from X to Z. On ascertaining the situation of the first ball, he would have just two choices—to play the first ball as it lay in the hazard or to continue the provisional ball in play (see Rule 19(2)), in which case he would lie 4 with the provisional ball at Z. Having played the provisional ball, he would not be allowed to abandon it and drop a third ball behind B, as for example at C.

In short, it's now permissible to play a provisional ball for a ball which may be in a water hazard, but often it won't be a sensible thing to do.

Other Amendments

In its continuous study of the Rules, the Committee has discovered many opportunities to contribute toward a better general understanding. The result is a number of clarifying changes in the 1950 code. Some others which will affect play are:

BORROWING CLUBS (Preamble) — This Rule has been tightened for stroke play. Formerly one was prohibited from borrowing from a fellow-competitor. The word "fellow" has been deleted, with the result that borrowing from any competitor in a stroke competition is now a violation. (In match play, one still

may not borrow from a partner or an opponent.)

FINDING BALL (Rules 7(3a) and 17(1d)) — A player is now permitted to find and identify his ball under any condition, even to the extent of touching or moving parts of a hazard or loose impediments therein. For instance, if a ball is covered by sand or leaves, either may be removed and, when identification is accomplished, such sand or leaves must be replaced. A player is not necessarily entitled to see his ball when attempting to play it.

ARTIFICIAL OBSTRUCTIONS (Rule 7(4)) — The following statement of purpose has been added: "The player is entitled to freedom from interference by an artificial obstruction in order to strike the

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