

THE REFEREE

Decisions by the USGA Rules of Golf Committee

Example of symbols: "No. 50-1" means the first decision issued in 1950. "R. 7(3)" means Section 3 of Rule 7 in the 1950 Rules of Golf.

Type of Stroke

No. 50-22. D. 4; R. 10(1)

Q: Is there any manner of stroking in putting that is considered illegal? Is it illegal to face the hole and execute the stroke between the legs in a forward swing?

RICHARD C. TONGG
HONOLULU, HAWAII

A: The Rules of Golf provide no restriction on the type of stroke played provided the stroke is in fact a stroke and does not conflict with Definition 4 and Rule 10(1).

Casual Water in Entire Hazard

No. 50-26. R. 16(3)

Q: If a player's ball lie in a hazard in casual water and there is casual water completely covering the hazard, may she move the ball from deep water to shallow water within the hazard without penalty? In Rule 16(1 and 3) it says "on ground which avoids casual water."

MRS. H. E. PRIDMORE
HINSDALE, ILL.

A: Yes. When a hazard is completely covered by casual water, the intent of Rule 16(3a) is to permit playing the ball from as little casual water as possible. The phrase "on ground which avoids casual water" cannot be taken literally when casual water completely covers a hazard; otherwise, the Rule would be inoperative.

It should be noted that the object of this interpretation is to assure as much relief as possible from casual water, and not necessarily to permit changing the character or the line of the shot to be played. For example, if a hazard be almost completely covered by casual water and yet there remain a small area not so affected, a player desiring relief under Rule 16(3a) would be obliged to drop a ball in the unaffected area. In a hazard completely covered by casual water, he would be obliged to drop a ball in the shallowest part.

Provisional Ball for Ball in Water Hazard

No. 50-38. R. 17(2c)

Q: A player drives a ball from the teeing ground to the middle of the fairway. His second shot drops into a water hazard in front of the green. If he elects to play a provisional ball from the spot where the original ball was hit, is he playing his third stroke or his fourth stroke?

EVANS G. MORGAN
LARCHMONT, N. Y.

A: He is playing his fourth stroke if the provisional ball ultimately becomes the ball in play. See Rule 17(2c).

Four-Ball Match Handicaps

No. 50-43. Hdep.

Q: At my club when two players play two opponents, two points a hole, one on low ball and one on aggregate, if any strokes are given they are taken off the aggregate score only.

When I was a guest at another club the three members had handicaps of 12 each, and mine being 8, four strokes were added onto my ball. This arrangement permitted the opponents to win two points on some holes on one handicap stroke. It also seemed to work out that I was giving each opponent a stroke on the 4 handicap holes. It seems to me that if the handicap strokes are used in this manner only two strokes should be given instead of four.

I would appreciate your comments.

DR. FRANK W. JORDAN
LOUISVILLE, KY.

A: The Rules of Golf do not cover playing for points on a "low ball and aggregate" basis. However, it is customary in such matches for players receiving strokes to use them in determining both the low ball and the aggregate. If this were not so, it seems unlikely that two very high handicap players would ever win low ball from two low handicap players.

The USGA Handicap Committee recommends the following for four-ball match play: "Reduce the stroke play handicaps of all four players by the handicap of the low handicap player, the low handicap player then to play from scratch. Allow each of the other three players two-thirds of the resulting difference, strokes to be taken by each player as they come on the card."

When this method is followed, it is proper for a player's net score on a hole to be used in determining both the better ball and the aggregate.

Striking Flagstick

No. 50-44. R. 7(7, 8)

Q: Would you give me a ruling on what the penalty is for hitting the pin, whether it is attended or not, in match play? Also in medal play?

THOMAS J. MCGINNIS
GROTON, N. Y.

A: In match play Rule 7(7) governs. In singles, if the player's ball strike the flagstick when it is held by or has been removed by the player or his caddie, his side shall lose the hole. If the player's ball strike the flagstick when it is held by or has been removed by an opponent or his caddie, the opponent loses the hole. There is no penalty for striking an unattended flagstick. For other forms of match play, see Rule 7(7).

In stroke play Rule 7(8) governs. When a competitor's ball lying within 20 yards of the hole is played and strikes the flagstick or the person standing at the hole, the penalty is two strokes. When the flagstick is attended the penalty is incurred when the ball is played from any distance. When the flagstick is not attended and the ball is played farther than 20 yards from the hole, there is no penalty for striking the flagstick.

Playing Through Slower Group

No. 50-47. Et.; R. 8, 12(5b, 6); Tourn.

Q 1: When no competition is being played and a course is fairly crowded, what is the proper procedure regarding precedence? Rules of Golf, Etiquette (Priority on the Course) does not answer this question fully.

Should four players offer to let two go through them even if they are not looking for lost balls? Is it very impolite for two players to ask four to let them play through when the four are playing much more slowly? Does a larger group not have to let a smaller group go through?

A 1: The matter is governed by Etiquette (Priority on the Course). A club may supplement this with local rules if it deems them necessary.

Precedence is governed by courtesy. Slower players should invite faster players to go through whenever there is a clear hole ahead and the faster players are being delayed. It would not be impolite under such circumstances for the faster players to ask if they might go through.

Ball Striking Fellow-Competitor's Caddie

Q 2: In stroke play, if A's ball hits himself or his partner or either of their caddies or their clubs, he is penalized two strokes under Rule 12(6). In match play, the penalty is loss of hole.

If in stroke play A's ball hits fellow-competitor B's caddie or B's golf bag, B is not penalized. It is a rub of the green, except as provided in Rule 7(8), and A plays his ball from where it lies under Rule 12(5b).

Is there any Rule to protect A from having his ball stopped by B's caddie in stroke play? We know B would lose the hole in match play. But B could cause A trouble and vice versa in stroke play with no penalty.

A 2: There is no such Rule, and none is deemed necessary since golfers are presumed

to be sportsmen and to be in control of their caddies.

Your summarization of Rule 12(6) is incomplete. In best-ball and four-ball matches, if a player's ball strike himself, his partner, either of their caddies or forecaddies or their clubs, only that player shall be disqualified for the hole.

Questions by: MRS. GEORGE JOHNSTON
CARACAS, VENEZUELA

Water Hazard: Penalty in Re-teeing

No. 50-48. R. 17(2)

Q: We have a lake about 100 yards in front of one of our tees which has to be carried on the drive. We have a rule on our score card which states: "A ball driven into the lake—player may re-tee, playing 3." Is this correct?

Of course, the player may drop a ball near the lake and also play 3 if he desires.

Has there been a recent change in the Rules which states that a ball driven into such a hazard may be re-teed, playing 2?

JACK SABOL

WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.

A: The Rule on your club's score card is correct but incomplete.

Rule 17(2) provides: "If a ball lie or be lost in a water hazard (whether the ball lie in water or not), the player may drop a ball, under penalty of one stroke, either (a) behind the hazard, keeping the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard between himself and the hole, or (b) in the hazard, keeping the spot at which the ball entered the water between himself and the hole; or (c) as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played; if the ball was played from the teeing ground, a ball may be teed anywhere within the teeing ground."

There has been no change in the Rules which would permit remission of the penalty stroke for a ball lying or lost in a water hazard.

Defining Boundaries

No. 50-51. R. 9

Q: Is there a new Rule this year in regard to the placement of white out-of-bounds stakes approximately two feet inside the regular out-of-bounds fences denoting club property?

JIM C. RUSSELL

WALLA WALLA, WASH.

A: No.

It is the responsibility of the authority in charge of a course to determine boundaries. Distinctive stakes or a fence may be used, but there can be only one boundary and that line must be clearly defined.

The only change in the 1950 Rules of Golf relating to Rule 9 is that now a ball is out of bounds "when the whole of it" lies outside the course. Formerly a ball was out of bounds when "the greater part of it" lay outside the course.

Pairings for Consolation Flight

No. 50-53. Tourn.

Q: If 32 players are paired according to their scores for the championship flight and the first-round losers make up the first flight, is it proper to pair the players the same as if they were being paired in a consolation flight? Or, would it be wrong to make a new draw?

I contend that they should be paired the same as if they were going into the consolation flight because the draw has already been made according to their scores.

EVERETT NELSON
SHREVEPORT, LA.

A: The question is one for local committee to determine; it is not covered in the Rules of Golf.

It is customary to pair losers in the first round for a consolation flight in the same order as they were originally drawn at the start of match play.



Water Hazard: Local Rule Not Necessary

No. 50-54. R. 17(2), LR.

Q: You will find enclosed a rough sketch of the first and second holes of Shaker Ridge Country Club, near Albany, N. Y. (Sketch shows two parallel holes, with body of water in front of second tee extending into rough bordering first fairway 245 yards from first tee.)

There has never been any question that a ball hit from the second tee into the water in front of the tee is to be teed up again, the player shooting three. However, there always has been a question concerning a ball hit into the same body of water from the first tee, the distance measuring approximately 245 yards.

The lower handicap player claims he is unfairly penalized for fading or slicing a long ball in having to shoot three off the first tee when a shorter hitter, never able to reach that distance but pushing or slicing a ball badly into the second fairway, has a clear shot for the first green with no penalty.

What is the ruling covering a ball driven into the water off the first tee?

Where is it to be teed up or placed?

Do you recommend a local rule to cover the play in question on our first hole, particularly in view of the impending Empire State Open Tournament?

GEORGE ARONSON
TROY, N. Y.

A: Rule 17(2) governs when a ball lies or is lost in a water hazard. It provides that "the player may drop a ball, under penalty of one stroke, either (a) behind the hazard, keeping

the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard between himself and the hole, or (b) in the hazard, keeping the spot at which the ball entered the water between himself and the hole, or (c) as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played; if the ball was played from the teeing ground, a ball may be teed anywhere within the teeing ground." This applies unless superseded by local rule.

The water hazard described is not of a type for which a local rule seems necessary. We recommend that Rule 17(2) govern all cases. There seems to be enough opportunity for a long hitter to take advantage of his length if he controls his drive. Control is the basic test of golf.

Ball Struck Unintentionally: Stroke Is Counted

No. 50-55. Def. 4, 7.

Q: A player strikes a teed ball on the teeing round but contends that he was taking a practice swing and had no intention of hitting the ball. His opponent contends that he must count the stroke and play the ball from where it came to rest.

SAMUEL E. DAVIS
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

A: If a player in making a swing strikes the ball, he thereby makes a stroke. The fact that he struck the ball supersedes the fact of intent under Definition 4. Striking the ball on the teeing ground also puts the ball in play under Definition 7.

Reason for Relief From Casual Water

No. 50-56. R 8, 16, 17.

Q: Can a player drop his ball behind a bunker, keeping the point of entry between himself and the hole, for a one-stroke penalty?

This permission is directly granted in Section 2 of Rule 17 in the 1950 Rule book, providing the ball is in a hazard known as a water hazard.

If the answer to the above question is "no," why is a player permitted to drop behind a bunker if his ball has come to rest in casual water in a bunker? (Section 3 of Rule 16)?

HARRY WINTERS
INGLEWOOD, CAL.

A: A bunker is a hazard—see Definitions in Rule 17. Except as otherwise provided for special circumstances, when a ball lies in a bunker, the player must play it as it lies or declare it unplayable and proceed under Rule 8. There is no Rule which would permit him to drop behind the bunker under penalty of one stroke, under normal circumstances.

Rule 17(2) provides specifically for relief, with penalty, when a ball lies or is lost in a water hazard.

Rule 16(3) provides specifically for relief when a ball lies or is lost in casual water in a hazard which is not a water hazard.

Relief is granted from casual water anywhere on the course because casual water is a special condition and not a regular part of the course.