

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.

Violation Waived by Fellow Competitors

No. 50-68. R. 2(2), 11(3c), 21(5)

Q: In qualifying for a club championship, a competitor failed to hole out; the ball was picked up from beside the hole. The three fellow competitors observed the breach but said nothing nor did they report it to the officials. The violation was reported by spectators.

1. Shall the three fellow competitors be deemed to have tacitly agreed "to exclude the operation of any rule or local rule" and to "waive any penalty incurred?" Rule 2(2) is met with the argument that the fellow competitors did not agree to anything, that they were only spectators to the violation.

2. Must the three fellow competitors be disqualified for failure to report the violation to the officials?

3. Must the competitor who failed to hole out be disqualified?

ALBIN MARTINSON
SACRAMENTO, CAL.

A: 1. Fellow competitors who witness a clear violation of the Rules, understand it as such and fail to protest or report it thereby agree to waive a Rule. They have a responsibility to all other competitors as well as to themselves. They should be disqualified under Rule 2(2).

2. The penalty is disqualification for all concerned in the tacit agreement, under Rule 2(2).

3. Yes. See Rule 21(5). He could have avoided disqualification by replacing his ball, with a penalty of two strokes, and completing his play of the hole before striking off from the next teeing ground, or, in the case of the last hole of the round, before leaving the putting green. See Rule 11(3c).

Removing the Flagstick

No. 50-70. R. 7(7).

Q: In match play, does the player have the right to have the pin attended when his opponent is approaching the green, whether it be from 60 feet or 200 yards, or does the player's opponent have the right to demand that the pin be left unattended?

JACK F. BINSWANGER
ORELAND, PA.

A: Rule 7(7) provides in part: "The flagstick may be removed by either side at any

time. A player may, however, always have the position of the hole indicated to him."

Thus, if an opponent wishes, he may have the flagstick removed when a player is approaching the green from any distance. If the player then wishes to have the position of the hole indicated to him, he may have his caddie attend the flagstick while he plays his stroke.

Score Card in Match Play

No. 50-74 Misc.

Q: In match play does player carry and mark own score or does opponent?

MRS. RAY H. WATSON
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

A: Rules of Golf do not require recording scores hole by hole in match play. Custom of game is for loser to report result of match. In USGA match play championships when there is no referee player having honor at first tee is requested to record scores of both players hole by hole for press information, but such score cards do not have official standing because match play result only is important.

Dropped Ball Rolls against Boundary Fence

No. 50-75. R. 7(4), 8, 10(5b), 18(Def.)

Q: Ball up against direction flag back of green so flag interferes with shot, so I'm allowed to drop without penalty; but ball when dropped rolls up against out-of-bounds fence that is stationary so I can't make a swing. What may I do?

HAP MALEA
PORTLAND, ME.

A: Since you cannot play the ball as it lies, you must treat it as unplayable and proceed as provided in Rule 8. In dropping a ball under Rule 8(1), the spot of dropping is the spot from which you played your last stroke, that is, the stroke which sent the ball near the direction flag.

Free relief from a boundary fence is not afforded by Rule 7, which provides in part that artificial obstructions do not include fences or fence posts.

In dropping the ball away from the direction flag, it is assumed that you proceeded under Rule 7(4c). In so dropping a ball, the player must accept the eventual result: except that he must re-drop if the ball comes to rest nearer the hole or out of bounds or in a hazard when dropped from outside a hazard; see Rule 10(5b).

You state that your ball came to rest against a direction flag behind a green. If the ball lay within 20 yards of the hole and not in a hazard, it was technically on the putting green (see Rule 18, Definitions) and you would originally have been entitled to place your ball as provided in Rule 7(4c). However, since you dropped it, you waived the right to place it.

Practice Putts Permitted

No. 50-76. R. 2(1, 3), 13(5).

Q: The 1950 Rules of Golf state that no practice strokes may be taken on the course after the ball has been hit off the first tee. This Rule is being construed here to mean that once a player holes out his ball on any green during the course of his round, he cannot take a practice putt or putts before teeing off from the next teeing ground. The Rule is further being construed that if a player, after holing out, does take a practice putt, each such practice putt must be added to his score for the next hole?

Is this construction correct?

DAVID M. LILLY
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

A: No.

Rule 13(5) provides: "After playing from the first teeing ground a player shall not play a practice stroke with a ball from any teeing ground or during the play of any hole."

A player may make a practice stroke after play of one hole has been completed and before striking off from the next teeing ground, provided play is not delayed in contravention of Rule 2(3).

The penalty for violation of Rule 13(5) is loss of hole in match play and disqualification in stroke play — see Rule 2(1).

Partners Exchange Balls

No. 50-78. R. 13(4b).

Q: This happened in a four-ball match and has reference to Rule 13(4b) of the Rules of Golf. A and B, partners, hit each other's balls and it was discovered before the opponents hit another shot. According to the Rule, A, the first man who hit, is disqualified. B also hit the wrong ball, having hit A's ball. Aren't both men disqualified, because both of them have hit the wrong ball?

They ruled that the first man, A, was disqualified and his partner could drop a ball and play without penalty. I would appreciate an official ruling on this question, as the Rule doesn't definitely state what will happen if both men hit each other's balls.

W. H. NEALE
NEW HAVEN, CONN.

A: The ruling by the local committee was incorrect. Since A and B in turn played each other's balls, A and B in turn disqualified themselves under Rule 13(4b).

Casual Water Defined

No. 50-83. R. 16(Def.)

Q: What do you consider casual water on fairways? If the weight of the player brings

up water out of the ground while he is addressing his ball, is that considered casual water?

JOHN R. INGLIS
ELMSFORD, N. Y.

A: Yes, if it is in fact a "temporary accumulation of water" — see Rule 16(Definition) — which arises as the player takes his normal stance, and not by undue effort on his part to cause it to become visible. Soft, mushy earth does not in itself constitute casual water.

Hazard Touched Before Forward Swing

No. 50-86. R. 1(1, 2), 2(1), 17(1).

Q 1: The Rule in connection with playing a ball which lies in or touches a hazard is not quite clear to me in one respect — that is, the touching of sand when the player is striking at the ball. It says that the club shall not touch the ground nor shall anything be touched or moved "before the player plays his stroke."

Now, does striking at the ball mean the backswing or does it mean only the forward swing?

A 1: The phrase quoted in Rule 17(1) refers to the forward swing. A stroke is the *forward* movement of the club made with the intention of striking the ball — see Definition 4. Thus Rule 17(1) prohibits touching the hazard on the backward swing.

Q 2: Oftentimes in a trap the ball is so located in a hole or with a mound of sand high behind it that the sand might be touched in the player's backswing without grounding his club at the start. I would like to know whether or not such a touching of the sand would be a penalty.

A 2: Yes — loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play — see Rules 17(1) and 2(1).

Doubt as to Infraction

Q 3: Playing with wedges which have a deep flange, a player can touch the sand, not immediately when it leaves the ball but maybe a foot or so back, without being aware of it. I am wondering what would happen if, in playing a match, the opponent would say that the player touched the sand on his backswing and the player honestly thought that he did not. What would be the decision, and what is the penalty?

A 3: The question is one of fact, and a decision can be made only by the referee or by the committee in charge after hearing all available testimony. If the player violated Rule 17(1), the penalty is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play.

Questions by: F. L. REGGIN, Sr.
Port Huron, Mich.

Provisional Ball for Ball in Water Hazard

No. 50-88. Pre; R. 7(6), 10(5b), 12(5), 17(Def.), 18(7, 9), 19(2); LR

Q 1: A player plays a provisional ball for a ball in a water hazard. He then plays his next stroke with the ball that was in the water hazard. Having done this, is he not required, in both medal and match play, to abandon the provisional ball?

A 1: Yes. Rule 19(2) provides in part: "The player may play a provisional ball until he reaches the place where the original ball is likely to be. He shall then elect to play either (a) the original ball, in which case there shall be no penalty, or (b) the provisional ball, under penalty provided in the Rule governing the particular case. When the player makes his choice, the other ball shall then be retired from play."

Water Hazards: Defining Limits

Q 2: Along the oceanside of the 18th fairway of the Pebble Beach golf course, the beach is considered "a part of the golf course," i.e., the beach is not designated as a hazard. Regardless of this local rule, it is not true that a ball touched by water from the ocean must be considered as lying in a water hazard?

A 2: It depends upon the interpretation of the local committee. In the absence of a local rule to the contrary, such water is a water hazard; and it is the duty of the authorities in charge of a course accurately to define the extent of the hazards—see Rule 17 (Definitions). However, it is within the province of the local authorities to classify such water as not constituting a water hazard; in fact, this was done by the USGA for its Championships at Pebble Beach in 1947 and 1948, when a USGA local rule provided in part that "Ditches, gullies, the ocean and its beach and banks are 'through the green.' A ball lying therein may be treated as unplayable under Rule 8. Rule 17(2) for water hazards does not apply. Water in such places is neither a hazard nor casual water."

Re-Dropping Ball not Permitted

Q 3: A player drove a ball so that it came to rest in a gopher hole at the top of a steep slope which ran from right to left across the fairway. The player could not drop a ball without it rolling down the slope a distance of about 40 yards. In spite of the length of roll of the dropped ball, when it came to rest it was not nearer the hole. Was the player entitled to place his ball?

A 3: No. Rule 10(5b) provides the only conditions under which a ball may be placed instead of dropped under such a circumstance. It states: "If a dropped ball come to rest nearer the hole or out of bounds or in a hazard when dropped from outside a hazard, it shall be re-dropped without penalty. If it be impossible to prevent a dropped ball from rolling into any such position, it shall be placed."

It is assumed that the ball had been dropped under Rule 7(6).

Substituting Clubs

Q 4: A player carrying 14 clubs was desirous of substituting his old putter for the new one with which he started the match if he discovered during play that the new putter being tried did not function satisfactorily. He there-

fore had a friend who followed the match carry his old putter, and actually made the substitution of the old club for the new one on the eighth hole of the match. Although the player in question never had more than 14 clubs in his bag at one time, did he in essence violate the 14-club rule? If not, what rule is there to prohibit any type or number of such substitutions at any stage of a match?

A 4: Unless the putter was replaced because it had become unfit for play, the player violated the Preamble of the Rules of Golf, and the penalty is disqualification. The Preamble provides in part: "A player is permitted to use during a round the clubs, not exceeding fourteen, in his bag when he started except that, without unfairly delaying play and without borrowing from an opponent or a partner or a competitor, he may (1) add a club or clubs up to the limit of fourteen, or (2) replace a club which becomes unfit for play in the normal course of play."

Conceding Putt Improperly

Q 5: A and B both lie about 12 inches from the cup. A is putting for a 3, B for a 5. A is declared away. A then walks to the hole, says "That's good" to B and hits B's ball away. He then sinks his putt for a 3. According to the Rules, did A lose the hole?

A 5: Yes. Since A had not holed out, he had no right to move B's ball. In knocking away B's ball, A violated Rule 12(5) and the penalty is loss of hole. It is assumed that A's ball was not within six inches of B's ball.

Questions by: DR. WILLIAM J. ONEAL
Pasadena, Calif.



Obstruction Relief Improving Line

No. 50-118. R. 7(4)

Q: Ball landed behind tree. From its resting place, it was stymied by tree in line to pin for next shot. However, an immovable bench was practically over the ball.

Due to the immovable bench, the ball can be moved two club-lengths not nearer the hole, but in moving and dropping can the two club-lengths be taken so as to avoid the tree as a hazard, or does the drop have to be made still keeping the tree between ball and pin for next shot?

LLOYD ASPINWALL, JR.
MANHASSET, N. Y.

A: The position of the tree is immaterial if, as it appears, the player is entitled by Rule 7(4c) to relief from the immovable bench. The ball may be dropped within two club-lengths of that point of the obstruction nearest where the ball originally lay and must come to rest not nearer the hole, regardless of how the desired line of flight may be affected.