

# THE REFEREE

## Decisions by the USGA Rules of Golf Committee

Example of symbols: "No. 51-1" means the first decision issued in 1951. "R 7(3)" means Section 3 of Rule 7 in the 1951 Rules of Golf.

### Temporary Substitution of Club

No. 51-5. Pre.

**Q:** Competitor, who started play with 14 clubs, exchanged his putter for another after holing out at No. 9 and before striking from the 10th tee—there was no undue delay.

Competitor handed his second putter to his caddie and played to the tenth putting surface (a par 3). He was then advised that he could not exchange a club for another unless the original club became unfit for play through normal use, etc. He then exchanged putters (without undue delay, fortunately, because a fellow competitor in the same threesome had asked for and received a ruling from the Rules Committee on another matter; this momentary delay allowed the "switch") and continued play with his original putter. The 15th club had been in the hands of the competitor and in those of his caddie—it had never been used, of course, nor had it entered the competitor's golf bag. Should these facts have any bearing?

Question by: HOWARD CAPPS  
TOURNAMENT SUPERVISOR  
PGA OF AMERICA  
CHICAGO, ILL.

**A:** The competitor replaced a club which had not become unfit for play. As he was already carrying 14 clubs, he violated the Preamble to the Rules of Golf and disqualified himself. What happened subsequently has no bearing. The competitor had opportunity to use more than 14 clubs.

### Provisional Ball Optional

No. 51-1. R. 8 (1), 19

**Q:** In the 1950 Rules, Rule 19(1b) says a provisional ball may be played only before the player goes forward to search for the original ball; but Rule 8(1) says that the player shall play his next stroke as nearly as possible at the spot from which the lost or unplayable ball was played.

It seems to me these two rules conflict with each other; Rule 8 makes you go back to the tee, and Rule 19 says you can't go back after you go forward to search for the ball.

Question by: C. BECKETT  
MUNCIE, IND.

**A:** There is no conflict. A player is not obliged to play a provisional ball; it is optional with him as to whether he does so or not. If the player believes his original ball may be lost or unplayable among other things, Rule 19 allows

him to play a provisional ball immediately, before he or his partner goes forward to search for the original ball. When he elects to play a provisional ball, the player must observe the directions in Rule 8(1) as well as in Rule 19.

If a provisional ball has not been played and the original ball is either lost or unplayable, the player must proceed under Rule 8.

### Concession Can Be Declined

No. 51-3. R. 12(5e), 18(9)

**Q:** In a four-ball match, my partner has picked up and both of my opponents are on the green, almost exactly the same distance from the hole; in fact, the one farther from the hole is only about one-fourth inch from his partner's ball. One lies 3 and the other 4. I lie 3, about 15 feet from the hole, and am away. I putt and make a birdie 4. I then concede the putt of the opponent who lies 4, as he cannot win or halve the hole; and I knock his ball away.

My opponents protest and say the man who had already played 4 had the right to putt; apparently his partner, who lay 3, wanted to see how the putt would roll.

I contend that the man who had already played 4 was out of the hole, as he could not beat or tie my score. I would like to know whether I could concede the putt of my opponent who had already played 4.

Question by: RICHARD K. KALLIO  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**A:** As you knocked your opponent's ball away after you and your partner had completed play of the hole, you were within your rights and no penalty was incurred—see Rule 18(9). However, the concession did not have to be accepted by your opponent. He could have replaced his ball without penalty and completed play of the hole.

The act of replacing the ball and putting under the circumstances cited would constitute, in equity, a clear rejection of the concession. If you had knocked your opponent's ball away before you and your partner had completed play of the hole, you would have violated Rule 12(5e) and your side would have lost the hole.

### Casual Water on Putting Green

No. 51-7. R. 16 (2), 18 (Def.).

**Q:** 1: My niblick shot on our 14th hole went six feet off the prepared putting surface but only 23 feet from the hole. It had rained the night before and there was a yard-square ac-

accumulation of casual water one foot in front of my ball directly in line to the hole. I contended it my privilege to lay around to nearest clear shot to the hole — under Rule 16(2) and Rule 18.

**A. 1:** Your contention is correct.

**Q. 2:** I notice also in the Rules that mowing does not define the green's limits. Therefore, if my ball is off the green 50 feet from the hole and about five feet short of a trap, with an accumulation of casual water between me and the hole, could I move over to nearest clear shot to hole?

**A. 2:** Yes, in the manner provided in Rule 16(2). The ball lay on the putting green as defined in Rule 18.

Questions by: RAY FORRESTER  
HERNDON, CALIFORNIA

### Ball on Grass, Not in Hazard

No. 51-10. R. 7(1)

**Q:** The ball has come to rest on grass at the edge of a bunker or on a grass mound within the bunker. As I understand it, this grass is not part of the hazard and the club may be grounded. However, the ball is so close to the sand that in order to ground the club it would be necessary to do so in the sand. May the club still be grounded?

**A:** Yes. As the ball does not lie in or touch a hazard, Rule 17(1) does not apply. However, the player still is subject to the restrictions in Rule 7(1).

Question by C. F. COCKRELL  
NORTHFIELD, ILL.

### Things Growing; Dropping from Obstruction

No. 51-18. R. 7(3), 7(4b)

**Q. 1:** Our course has numerous evergreen trees. One is quite bushy and the branches extend within one foot of the ground. Rule 7(3) states that a player shall not improve the position of his ball by moving, bending, or breaking anything fixed or growing, except (1) so far as is necessary to enable him fairly to take his stance in addressing the ball, and (2) in making his backward or forward swing. Some of our members contend that since a backward or forward swing cannot be made while under one of these trees, the Rule permits the player to break or chop off any of the branches.

**A. 1:** Rule 7(3) prohibits improving the position of the ball. The Rule contemplates that there may be some moving, bending, or breaking of fixed or growing objects as an incident in the course of taking a fair stance at address and in making the backward or forward swing, and it excuses such incidental movements. However, the Rule prohibits purposeful moving, bending or breaking with the aim of improving the position of the ball. The second exception in Rule 7(3) condones only such moving, bending or breaking as may incidentally be done

in making the swing, but it does not allow such action in order to make the swing.

**Q. 2:** With reference to Rule 7(4) and (4b), which way do you lay the ball from an artificial obstruction? What is the interpretation of "where the ball originally lay?" Is it the position at the obstruction or the position from where the stroke was previously played? We have a hole where to the left of the green is No. 9 tee-house. If the ball comes to rest in the middle of the tee-house, it would certainly make a difference where the ball was placed since if required to place the ball north, back in the direction from where the shot was originally played, the player then would have a barrier in the form of a tree. If moved two lengths south the shot would be free to the green.

**A. 2:** Rule 7(4b) gives the player the right to lift without penalty and drop within two club-lengths of that point of the obstruction nearest where the ball originally lay, but the ball must come to rest not nearer the hole. The player may drop away from the obstruction in any direction, provided it is not nearer the hole.

**Q. 3:** With reference to Rule 7(3), it is stated that drawing a club backward and forward across the line of play is illegal. We have several putters who while getting set to putt do swing back and forward over the top of the ball in the direction of the hole. Is this illegal?

**A. 3:** No.

Questions by: JOSEPH W. MENZIE  
MANHATTAN, KANSAS

### Smoothing Sand in Bunker

No. 51-19. R. 17(1e)

**Q. 1:** A player plays from a sand trap. The ball does not get out of the trap. The player smoothes his footprints made in executing the first shot before playing the next, which is from an entirely different area of the trap. Is there a penalty?

**A. 1:** Not unless the player's actions assisted him in subsequent play of the hole. Rule 17(1e) relieves the player of penalty for smoothing irregularities made in a hazard by his stroke, provided nothing is done that improves the lie of the ball or assists the player in his subsequent play of the hole.

**Q. 2:** A player plays his shot from a sand trap. The ball goes over the green into another trap. Before leaving the first trap the player smooths his footprints. He then makes his shot from the second trap and his ball goes back into the first trap, possibly right where he had smoothed it over. Is there a penalty?

**A. 2:** Not unless there is a preponderance of evidence that his actions improved the lie of his ball or assisted him in subsequent play. It is a question of fact whether or not his actions aided him, as stated in Rule 17(1e).

Questions by: MRS. C. F. COCKRELL  
NORTHFIELD, ILL.