
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.

Player Responsible for Own Ball

No. 51-9. Def. 1; R. 2 (1, 5), 3(2), 10(5a)

Q.: During a mixed foursome event, all balls were on the putting green. The player away was about to putt, then asked that one of the balls in his approximate line be marked. The caddie laid a coin behind the ball and picked it up. The player then asked that the coin be moved away, also. This the caddie also did, moving the coin two spans sideways. Eventually it came time for the player to putt whose ball had been marked. Unknowingly, this player placed his ball in front of the coin where it lay and putted out, requiring two putts to get the ball in the hole. Then one of his opponents claimed the player who had just holed out had incurred a penalty for not replacing the ball in its proper position before putting.

Should the player be penalized when his ball had been marked by a caddie at the other player's request? Should not the claiming player have been responsible for seeing that the ball which he had asked to be marked be accurately returned to its original lie? Finally, if the ball was not replaced at its original lie, was it not out of play until so restored? Even though the player had holed out through no error of his, could he not then have restored his ball to its proper lie and putted it in the hole without penalty?

Question by: HARRY WINTERS
INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA

A.: It apparently was a four-ball match, not a foursome. For distinction between foursome and four-ball match, see Definition 1.

It is a custom of the game for a ball to be lifted and marked only by the player or his side, including the side's caddies. If a caddie for the player's side marked the ball, even without the player's knowledge, the player is not excused; it is up to the player to insure that his ball is replaced properly. The opponent has no responsibility in that connection.

Rule 10(5a) provides: "When a ball is lifted and dropped or placed under the Rules, unless otherwise provided, it must be dropped or placed as near as possible to the place where it lay and must come to rest not nearer the hole."

Duty to Report Violations

No. 51-15, R. 2(2), 11(1), 13(3a), 17(1),
21 (4)

Q. 1: I would like a ruling on the following:

(a) A and B were playing ahead of C and

D in a 54-hole medal tournament announced as being run under USGA rules. C saw A lift his ball twice from a buried lie in the sand trap and then sweep the sand away from behind it with his club before hitting the ball. C contends A had no right to touch the ball even for identification, and was only entitled to remove enough sand so the top of the ball could be seen. Is this correct?

(b) The chairman claimed that C had no right to report this violation as C was not playing with A. The chairman said that only B had the right and as B had not seen it, nothing could be done about it. Did C have the right to report this?

(c) The following day C noticed that A had posted a wrong score on two different holes. B, who was playing with A, verified this but thought he would be disqualified for attesting a wrong score. Would B be disqualified for this?

(d) The chairman claimed C could not report this or make a protest as C was not playing with A and that a score posted and attested had to stand. Did C have a right to protest and should A have been disqualified?

A. 1: (a) A had the right to identify his ball. Rule 11(1) provides: "On notice to the opponent in match play and to the fellow competitor in stroke play, a ball in play may be lifted for identification, but it must be replaced on the spot from which it was lifted." This means that the player, as a matter of honor, must replace his ball in the same lie and position in which it was originally buried. However, it is rarely necessary to lift a ball out of sand to identify it. In order that a player may find his ball, Rule 7(3a) provides in part: "The player is always entitled to find his ball and to identify it. He may move fixed or growing objects (including sand) to the extent necessary to enable him to find or to identify the ball, provided that before addressing the ball he restores the objects (including sand) to their original position; he is not of necessity entitled to see the ball when playing the stroke." Exercise of this right often will make it unnecessary to lift the ball for identification.

In stroke play only, a further incentive to avoid lifting a ball for identification in a hazard is contained in Rule 13(3a), which excuses, without penalty, the play of a wrong ball in a hazard. However, A's action of sweeping sand from behind his ball before making a stroke was a violation of Rule 17(1).

(b) C not only had a right to report a violation of the Rules which he witnessed but was obliged to do so. Competitors who witness a clear violation of the Rules 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, and should be disqualified under Rule 2(2) if they fail to report violations which they witness.

(c) A should be disqualified if he returned a score for any hole lower than actually played—see Rule 21(4c). B is exempt from disqualification under Rule 21(4) Definition.

(d) See answer (b) above.

Q. 2: Is there a ruling that a contestant keep his fellow competitor's score and vice versa?

A. 2: There is no Rule that a fellow competitor keep a player's score unless designated by the Committee as a marker.

Q. 3: What is the ruling on a ball lying in a sand trap outside the sixty feet limit striking the pin attended by a double caddie?

A. 3: When one caddie is employed by two players the USGA recommends the following local rule (page 54, Rules of Golf) for match play singles:

The caddie is an agency outside the match except when he acts upon specific directions of a player, in which case he is considered to be that player's caddie. If he attends the flagstick without instruction, he is an agency outside the match. If he receives conflicting instructions from the two opponents, the wishes of the player who is about to play the stroke shall control. If the player instructed the caddie to attend the flagstick the penalty for striking the pin or caddie would be loss of hole.

Questions by: MRS. E. H. FOULK
MIAMI, FLORIDA

Casual Water Defined

No. 51-16. R. 8, 16

Q: I should like to have the casual water rule clarified. When the ground is saturated with water so a ball may be completely imbedded in or lost in soft mud, though there may not actually be a puddle of water, is this to be treated as a lost or unplayable ball or may the player obtain relief under Rule 16 (1)?

MRS. G. J. BERCHET
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

A. Casual water is defined in Rule 16. The presence or absence of a temporary accumulation of water, constituting casual water, is a question of fact. Soft, mushy earth does not in itself constitute casual water. When a player takes his normal stance, if a temporary accumulation of water appears which interferes with his stance or the lie of the ball, the player is entitled to relief as provided in Rule 16. In the absence of a local rule providing relief for an imbedded ball, the player must play the ball as it lies or declare it unplayable and proceed as provided in Rule 8.

Unnecessary Provisional Ball

No. 51-14. R. 1(3), 2(1, 3),
7(1, 2, 3), 13(5), 17(Def.), 19

Q. 1: In the qualifying round of a major tournament, a scratch handicap golfer was having trouble with his drives, consistently pulling them. After a few holes of this he hit a beautiful drive about 250 yards down the fairway. It was also a pull, but still visible, on the left of the fairway, from the tee. At this time he announced that he wanted to hit a provisional ball. As the Rules say, he doesn't have to announce his reasons for it. There was no question in anybody's mind that the player wanted to hit a practice shot, but calling it that would, of course, disqualify him. The matter was brought before the rules committee of this tournament, and the provisional ball was allowed.

I maintain that if this decision is allowed to stand, a player may hit a practice shot at any time, of any distance, and merely by calling it a provisional ball dodge the penalty which should be imposed. I am sure that was not the intent of the Rules. If so, any provision regarding the practice shot can be taken out of the Rules.

A. 1: The Rules of Golf are framed on the assumption that golfers play honestly. If a player conformed with the spirit of the first paragraph of Rule 19, he would never play a practice stroke disguised as a provisional ball.

Permission to play a provisional ball is granted by Rule 19 only on the following conditions: (a) when a ball may be lost, unplayable, out of bounds, or in a water hazard, and (b) for the sole purpose of saving time. From the statement of facts, it is obvious that no reasonable possibility existed that the ball were lost, unplayable, out of bounds, or in a water hazard.

Thus, it appeared that the player took unfair advantage of the permission to play a provisional ball. The committee in stroke play (or the opponent or the referee in match play) would have been justified in holding that the purpose of Rule 19 had not been observed and that a practice stroke had been taken in violation of Rule 13(5). It also might justifiably be claimed that the player breached Rule 2(3) prohibiting delay in play.

Attention is called to Rule 1(3), which provides: "If a point in question be not covered by the Rules of Golf or local rules, it shall be decided by equity."

Improving Position in Loose Dirt

Q. 2: Another question arises where a ball lies in dust, sand, or loose earth, not part of a hazard. According to the Rules, anything loose, not fixed or growing, may be moved. To what extent may this loose material be brushed away from the ball to give the ball a good lie where otherwise it would be a very bad one? I can find nothing in the Rules that would prevent a player from taking extreme measures in this case.

A. 2: Sand is a hazard except as noted in Rule 17 (Definition). Loose, pulverized dirt is not a loose impediment under Rule 7(2) but is a thing fixed under Rule 7(3)—(unless it is piled for removal or is a worm cast or animal cast or runway. Improving the ball's position by brushing away such loose dirt violates not only Rule 7(3) but could also breach Rule 7(1) prohibiting removal of irregularities of surface under certain conditions; the penalty is two strokes in stroke play or loss of hole in match play—see Rule 2(1).

(Questions by: STANLEY E. RIDDERHOF
LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA)

Changing Balls for Putt

No. 50-160. R. 2(1), 10(2)

Q: A is on the green in 3. He marks the place where his ball lies by the toe of his putter, puts the original ball in his pocket and puts down a new ball to putt with. While he is addressing the ball to putt, B claims the hole on Rule 10(3) because A did not hole out with his original ball.

Since A had not as yet putted, he replaced his original ball and claimed he still had the opportunity to hole it out, which he did for a half on the hole.

B claims that once he had picked up his original ball and did not do so under any of the Rules allowing the substitution of another ball, i.e., lost, unplayable, out of bounds or become unfit for play, he could not replace it and proceed playing.

A does not claim to have picked up his ball and replaced it with another ball under any of the Rules allowing him to do so, but does claim that since his opponent had called him on it before he had struck the replaced ball he

should be allowed to put back the original and play out.

A. V. "BUD" FOUTS
SAVANNAH, GA.

A: A lost the hole under Rules 10(2) and 2(1).

Practice on Day of Competition

No. 51-20. R. 13(5), 21(3).

Q: Will you please give me the Rules concerning practicing to or putting on any of the greens, except the practice greens, the day of competition of either match or medal play tournaments?

Question by: FRED E. GULICK
JOPLIN, MISSOURI

A: (1) *Stroke Play:* Rule 21(3) provides: "On a day of competition, a competitor shall not practice by playing on or onto any putting surface yet to be played in the stipulated round." The penalty is disqualification.

Match Play: The Rules of Golf do not prohibit practice before a round.

(2) During a round, a practice stroke from any teeing ground or during the play of any hole is prohibited by Rule 13(5).

Assist by Automobile

No. 51-8.

Q. 1: While playing a golf hole along a road one of the players hit his tee shot out of bounds and it hit an oncoming car and landed back in bounds. Is there any penalty?

Question by: ALAN ARTACH
DENVER, COLO.

A. 1: No penalty. (Just a good break.)

THE LONG HOLE

(Continued from Page 16)

we used our putters in order not to drop a ball in the drink.

"Instead of taking the main highway to Union, we went by way of Roebuck and Pauline to avoid the heavy Spartanburg-bound traffic.

"When we arrived in Union there was quite a celebration. We finished at 6:22 P.M. on the second hole at Woodlawn. 13 hours, 4 minutes from the time we started. It took Oyler two days to make his journey across the English countryside.

"A newsreel company had cameras there and took pictures of us as we made our final putts. Reporters were present, too. The rotogravure section of the New York Times used one picture. Just above it was one of Charles Lindbergh, who had just flown the Atlantic, and a picture

of President Herbert Hoover graced the other side. We were in fast company."

McWhirter doesn't advise anyone to try long-hole golf unless he's in perfect physical condition.

Mayor L. C. Wharton of Union gave a welcoming address when the pair ended the long hole. Officials for the event were Fred Parr, who kept score, and T. W. Wood, owner and manager of Union's Woodlawn Country Club, who saw that each shot was taken properly. R. C. Shores, of Shoresbrook Country Club at Spartanburg, was observer.

"We lost four balls in one field because the farmer had just plowed it and would not allow us in to get them," McWhirter recalled. "They were in plain sight, too."

McWhirter still plays a lot of golf at Harriman Golf and Country Club, where he has made a hole-in-one.