

Stroke and Distance for Out of Bounds

By ISAAC B. GRAINGER

CHAIRMAN, USGA RULES OF GOLF COMMITTEE

It is natural for golfers to feel that occasionally the Rules impose penalties that are too severe, and to remark that such and such a Rule ought to be changed. They express these views with the utmost sincerity and can advance very good reasons for their attitude.

It may not occur to them, however, that these very good reasons have been proposed by and to members of the Executive Committee over and over again, and that no Rule has ever been made without even better reasons in its favor.

The following exchange of correspondence between Milton A. Jentes, Chairman of the Green Committee of Elmwood Country Club, White Plains, N. Y., and the Chairman of the Rules of Golf Committee perfectly illustrates this point. In it, Mr. Jentes asks about a proposed change in a Rule which may become effective next year; and the USGA Rules Chairman explains why the USGA approves of it. Mr. Jentes writes:

Dear Sirs:

I was amazed to learn that the USGA and the British and Canadian rule making bodies had agreed on the penalty of both stroke and distance for an out of bounds ball. It is bad enough to lose a hole because of a lost ball or unplayable lie, both of which are often a matter of pure luck, but to have one bad shot, no worse than a mere topped ball, practically insure the loss of a hole and, in a qualifying round, to be out of the running if one hits two out of bounds, is rearing an obstacle against club co-operation with the rule making bodies.

It seems to me that practically every golfer to whom I have spoken protests against this rule and that the result will be that most clubs will simply create local rules to cover the situation, notwithstanding the fact that for the last past few years member clubs have endeavored to eliminate local rules wherever possible.

The trend in recent golf regulations showed an honest effort to minimize the luck element and to give relief from such things as guy wires and shelter houses, which previously could spoil a pleasant day. Except for the omission to prohibit practice swings in a hazard, the 1950 rules were a great improvement. Now along comes this bowing to tradition which can do the game no good and which will eventually

go the way of the stymie, for which constituted authorities fought so long and uselessly.

MILTON A. JENTES

Chairman Green Committee
Elmwood Country Club

The USGA replied as follows:

Dear Mr. Jentes:

As the Association is always glad to receive the view of those who are interested in golf, your letter is most welcome. It is particularly so at this time when there is under consideration the adoption of a uniform Code for world-wide play.

Recent conferences in London between representatives of the Rules-making bodies of the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia made possible the joint scrutiny of the accumulated experiences with every type of Rules application. Strangely enough, the most revealing experiences dealt with the situations to which you allude in your letter. Treatment of a ball lost, unplayable, or out of bounds has been a somewhat controversial subject over the years, and this has resulted in much Rules experimentation. However, this program of trial and error has brought to light the inconsistencies and inequities which make necessary the return to the original penalties which obviously seem severe. Various combinations of penalties have been tried for a number of years.

The USGA has experimented unsuccessfully with "distance only" for "out of bounds." On the other hand, the R & A for two years have applied "distance only" for "lost," "unplayable" and "out of bounds." They, too, discovered the unworkability of this somewhat popular liberalization. The answer to the problem is not as simple as some would think and does not stem, as you suspect, from "bowing to tradition." The conferees reached their conclusions after applying the Rules of logic and equity. It was unanimously felt that there could be no variance in penalties for the three situations because of the disadvantage to an opponent or competitor from misuse of the discretion allowed to a player. For instance, if the "lost ball" penalty were less than that for an "unplayable ball" or a "ball out of bounds," many cases would arise in which the player would prefer not to find his ball. If the lesser penalty were applied to a "ball out of bounds," there would be (and there has been under existing Rules) a tendency to declare, without proper search, a ball to be out of bounds instead of lost. USGA competition has produced many of these doubtful cases almost impossible of fair ad-

(Continued on Page 24)

is necessary. The Rules of Golf are framed on the assumption that golfers play honestly.

Ball Moving After Address

Q. 3: In regard to Rule 12(1b), if a player addresses a ball and then walks away from it and the ball moves before he returns to re-address it, should he be penalized one stroke?

A. 3: Rule 12(1b) is explicit and provides: "If a ball in play move after the player has addressed it, he shall be deemed to have caused it to move and the penalty shall be one stroke."

Ball Moved by Ball Outside Match

Q. 4: A player has approached on to a green and his ball has come to rest. If a ball struck by another who is outside of the match hits his ball, does he play the ball from where it lies or should he replace his ball as near as is possible to where it originally lay?

A. 4: If the lie of a ball at rest be altered by any outside agency except wind, the player shall place a ball as near as possible to the place where the ball originally lay, without penalty—see Rule 15(3). A ball outside of the match is an outside agency.

Questions by: DR. MILTON FENNER
Sacramento, Calif.

Balls Exactly 6 Inches Apart

No. 51-25. R. 18(7)

Q.: Please wire stymie rule clarification. If

balls are exactly six inches apart do you lift or putt?

Question by: HORTON SMITH, SECRETARY
PGA OF AMERICA
OAKMONT, PA.

A.: If balls are exactly six inches apart, there is no relief under Rule 18(7). Balls must be within (repeat, within) six inches for Rule to operate.

Smoothing Footprints in Hazard

No. 51-24. R. 17(1), 2(1)

Q.: Is there a penalty for a player who smooths out her footprints and does not get out of the hazard and when making next shot goes back to original lie?

Question by: MRS. THEODORE J. MEINDL
CHICAGO, ILL.

A.: The player loses the hole in match play or is penalized 2 strokes in stroke play—see Rules 17(1) and 2(1). Exception (e) in Rule 17 (1) does not apply here because the player has been assisted in subsequent play of the hole.

Practice Before Match Play

No. 51-26. R. 21-3

Q.: Is practice putting on green to be played in match competition legal on day of play, or does Rule 21 apply only to stroke play?

Question by: LT. NORMAN BUTLER, OFC
DAYTON, OHIO

A: Rule 21 applies only to stroke play.

STROKE AND DISTANCE

(Continued from Page 16)

judication because of the prevailing foliage and turf condition.

Having arrived at the aforementioned premise, that the penalties should be the same, we analyzed the application of the less severe penalty of "distance only." The two-year trial period by Great Britain produced some interesting discrepancies, but the most convincing arguments came from experiences with the unplayable ball. There are many cases in which no penalty results. As an example, a player is 15 yards from the flagstick with a bunker intervening; he flubs his shot into the sand and it comes to rest either in a good or bad lie. If he feels inexpert in playing from sand, he merely declares the ball unplayable and drops it back on the turf. That he has lost distance is of no importance (at most, only a few yards), because the next shot in his mind is easier from the turf than from sand. As another example — a hole of 125 yards — the player's tee shot strays into the woods, the ball lies well but the player is blocked out from the green, requiring another stroke before play to the green is possible. The opponent is helpless when the player elects to return to the tee for another try at the green. The result is again no penalty because

the distance lost is immaterial. In the same case, the player may have played a provisional ball from the tee before going forward to appraise the situation. If the provisional ball is played well and reaches the green for a possible one-putt, he would be quick to choose the latter. If the provisional ball comes to rest in a bunker, or other difficult lie, the player has the privilege of playing either the original or provisional ball depending upon which gives the greater advantage. These various alternatives result in severe inequity to an opponent or competitor. Under the "distance only" penalty, very seldom, if ever, would a "shanked" shot be played from where it comes to rest.

Many more examples could be given to prove that discretionary privileges should be accompanied by severer penalties in order to discourage a player from taking advantage of others — a privilege never intended under the Rules. I wish to assure you that every proposal to the respective governing bodies by the conferees was made only after consideration of all of the experience of the past and the foreseeable future effects upon play.

ISAAC B. GRAINGER

Chairman, Rules of Golf Committee