

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.

Balls Close Together in Bunker

No. 51-6. D. 1; R. 11(4), 12(2, 4, 4e)

Q. 1: There were four players, two against two, playing one match of two low balls and also a match of low ball.

The ball of player A was in a sand trap and so was the ball of one of his opponents, D. A's ball was 4½ feet back of D's. A used his putter in playing the shot; his ball struck D's ball and knocked it out of the trap.

(a) Does D have to place his ball back in the trap, or can he choose to play it where it came to rest?

(b) Could A have had D's ball lifted and marked before he made his shot?

(c) Please explain the difference between Rule 12(4) and 12(4e).

A. 1: Although we are willing to answer inquiries regarding duly constituted matches, we must decline to rule on complicated combinations which the Rules do not recognize, as, for example, playing singles and four-ball matches simultaneously. The following answers pertain to a four-ball match (see Definition 1):

(a) D was obliged to replace his ball. See Rule 12(4e).

(b) A could have obliged D to lift or play his ball—see Rule 11(4).

(c) Rule 12(4) applies to singles, threesomes and foursomes (as defined in Definition 1). Rule 12(4e) applies to three-ball, best-ball and four-ball matches.

Striking Ball Twice

Q. 2: Clarify Rule 12(2), Striking Ball Twice. Player in trap in playing 3 hit his ball twice, once in the sand and once in the air on his follow through.

When his ball comes to rest, is he lying 4 or 5 counting the penalty?

A. 2: Four.

Questions by: RUDY ADAMS
PORTERVILLE, CAL.

Responsibility, Replacing 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 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, CAL.

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."

Ball Hitting Another, Stroke Play

51-11 R. 12(4), 18 (Def.)

Q. 1: In four-ball stroke play, A and B are partners, and C and D are partners. A's ball is on the green near the hole. C chips his ball and it strikes A's ball, knocking it nearer the hole. Does A replace his ball in its original position, or let it stay where it was knocked to, or does he have a choice of either procedure?

A. 1: Although the Rules of Golf do not provide for four-ball stroke play, it would be equitable to apply the usual stroke play Rules. If the balls of C and A were on the putting green as defined in Rule 18, C incurred a penalty of two strokes. If C's ball was not on the putting green, there was no penalty. In

either case, A's ball had to be replaced immediately. See Rule 12(4 c and d).

Q. 2: Under the same conditions, what would the decision be in match play?

A. 2: In four-ball match play, there would be no penalty and A's ball would have to be replaced. See Rule 12(4e)

Questions by: LEWIS W. HOOD, JR.
BILOXI, MISS.

Putting Out of Turn

52-12 R. 2(2), 18(8)

Q. 1: A and B are playing a match in which the Nassau system of scoring is being used. They are playing stymies. A putts out of turn, B does not recall the putt. What is the penalty for A and B?

A. 1: It depends upon the circumstances. Assuming there was no referee:

(a) If both players were unaware of Rule 18(8) and played from the next tee before any claim was made, there was no penalty and the hole stands as played.

(b) If the players agreed to exclude the operation of Rule 18(8), both disqualified themselves under Rule 2(2). (There is nothing in the question to indicate that any such agreement existed).

Q. 2: Would the penalty be the same if this breach of the rules occurred during the last nine holes of play?

A. 2: Yes.

Questions by: MRS. M. F. CUNNINGHAM
LA GRANGE, ILL.

Sand Is a Hazard

51-13. R. 17 (def.)

Q.: My ball came to rest in what I considered light rough and I touched the ground or sand with my club. My opponent claimed the hole, insisting that it was a hazard, since it was a sandy area and such an area must be considered a hazard because, according to USGA, sand is a hazard. To further his argument, he insisted that Tommy Armour had ruled that all sand that lines the fairways of Florida must be considered hazards. I claimed that club officials must define such an area as a hazard before it must be played as a hazard, that a sweeping rule that makes all sand a hazard is unfair, particularly in Florida, where all fairways are lined with sandy rough or sandy bare wastes.

A.: Sand is a hazard-only Rule 17 (Definition). The rule exempts only "sand blown on to the grass or sprinkled on the course for its preservation."

It is a duty of the course authorities to define the hazards. Where sand prevails in great abundance, the local committee might be justified in adopting a local rule to provide that sand is a hazard only when within a bunker or other well-defined hazard. If that were done, the player still would be subject to the restrictions in Rule 7(1).

Question by: VINCENT ELDRED
WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Ball on Green Moved by Another

No. 51-11. R. 12(4), 18 (Def.)

Q. 1: In four-ball stroke play, A and B are partners, and C and D are partners. A's ball is on the green near the hole. C chips his ball and it strikes A's ball, knocking it nearer the hole. Does A replace his ball in its original position, or let it stay where it was knocked to, or does he have a choice of either procedure?

A. 1: Although the Rules of Golf do not provide for four-ball stroke play, it would be equitable to apply the usual stroke play Rules. If the balls of C and A were on the putting green as defined in Rule 18, C incurred a penalty of two strokes. If C's ball was not on the putting green, there was no penalty. In either case, A's ball had to be replaced immediately. See Rule 12(4 c and d).

Q. 2: Under the same conditions, what would the decision be in match play?

A. 2: In four-ball match play, there would be no penalty and A's ball would have to be replaced. See Rule 12(4e).

Questions by: LEWIS W. HOOD, JR.
BILOXI, MISS.

Repairing Ball-Marks on Green

No. 51-17. Et. 6; R. 7(7), 12(1b), 15(3), 17(2), 18(3, 4)

Q. 1: Six years ago the tournament committee established a local rule which allowed players to remove their balls from divot holes (pit marks) on the clipped portion of the putting green and to place such balls immediately beside these holes before making their putts. Players were also allowed to reconstruct all divot holes which were in their line of roll with a tee.

A few golfers have insisted that we have definitely violated the Rules of the USGA in putting this rule into effect.

A. 1: The Rules of Golf do not permit a player to repair divot marks between his ball and the hole. Rule 18(3) and (4) prohibit a player from touching the line of putt, from placing a mark anywhere on the putting green, and from testing the putting surface by roughening or scraping it.

Where the greenkeeping staff is not available to make frequent repairs as is done at USGA competitions, players should observe Section 6 of Etiquette, which provides that after the play of the hole is complete, the player should see that any ball hole made by him in the putting green is eradicated.

Ball Striking Flagstick Removed

Q. 2: My interpretation of Rule 7(7) is that a player loses a hole if he or his caddie has removed the flag and laid it off the green and his opponent's ball subsequently hits it. An opponent might deliberately shoot for the flag instead of the cup and if the flag is many feet off line it seems unfair to allow him to win a hole under these conditions.

A. 2: Your interpretation of Rule 7(7) is correct. The USGA feels that no modification

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