

Are Your Local Rules Necessary?

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When the new international code of Golf Rules became effective January 1 of this year, a great many local rules were rendered obsolete or unnecessary.

It now becomes the responsibility of the committee in charge of every course to review their course's peculiarities in the light of the new Rules of Golf. In many cases it will be found that no local rules whatever are necessary; in others, local rules will have to be re-drafted.

Our purpose here is to assist local committees in their work.

The first thing to do is obtain a copy of the 1952 Rules of Golf. Whenever you may think a local rule is necessary, first consult the basic Rules of Golf to see if the subject is not already covered. For instance, it is completely unnecessary and, in fact, positively incorrect to have local rules relating to a ball lost, unplayable or out of bounds. Under the new Rules, there are uniform penalties and procedures for all three cases — that is, stroke and distance.

In the new Rules booklet there is an Appendix, starting on page 57, and the first sub-division deals with local rules. It is the guide which the local committee should follow.

One of the first points in it bears emphasizing:

"A penalty imposed by a Rule of Golf shall not be waived by a Local Rule."

Fair play can be promoted only by steadfast observance of the basic Rules.

Lateral Water Hazards

For the first time the Rules of Golf now recognize lateral water hazards (more commonly called parallel water hazards in the United States). Under Definition 14, a lateral water hazard is one "running approximately parallel to the line of play, and so placed that when a ball is dropped within two club-lengths of where the ball entered the water hazard it is not possible to keep that part of the hazard between the player and the hole."

The phrase "it is not possible" has to be handled carefully. Sometimes a thing may be literally possible but, from the standpoint of golfing reason and fair play, not proper.

So this mere definition of words is not adequate to cover every conceivable little babbling brook that meanders over a golf course. Therefore, Definition 14 goes on to make the local committee responsible for exactly defining a lateral water hazard: "That part of a hazard to be played as a lateral water hazard should be distinctively marked. Stakes and lines defining the boundaries of hazards are not in the hazards."

Let it be emphasized — a water hazard or a section thereof properly becomes a *lateral* water hazard only when the local committee so defines it.

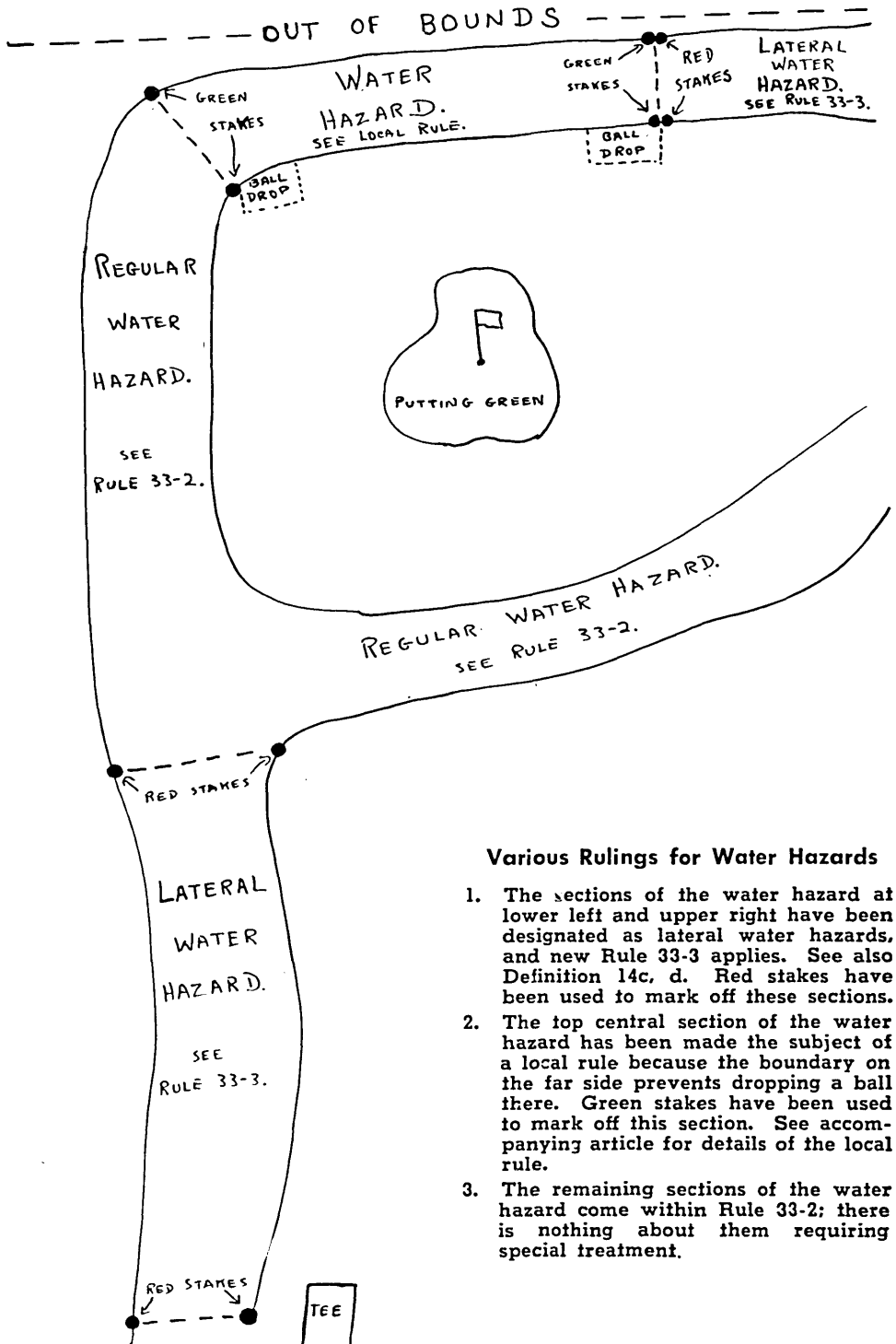
What may be a lateral hazard at one course could justifiably be a regular water hazard at another course, depending on playing conditions on the far side.

The sketch on the next page shows the general distinction between a regular water hazard and a lateral water hazard. In a case of this sort, the local committee should define the margins of all parts of the water hazard and then should define which sections are to be played as lateral water hazards.

The USGA recommends that the margins of all water hazards be defined by small white stakes — lathes dipped in whitewash will do, with about four to six inches exposed.

It is further recommended that portions to be played as lateral water hazards be distinctively marked by red stakes, and this may be done in either of several ways. One way is to mark the entire margin with small red stakes placed at frequent intervals. Another way is to erect large red stakes, about four feet exposed, at the beginning and the end of each lateral section, with appropriate signs,

(Continued on Page 8)



Various Rulings for Water Hazards

1. The sections of the water hazard at lower left and upper right have been designated as lateral water hazards, and new Rule 33-3 applies. See also Definition 14c, d. Red stakes have been used to mark off these sections.
2. The top central section of the water hazard has been made the subject of a local rule because the boundary on the far side prevents dropping a ball there. Green stakes have been used to mark off this section. See accompanying article for details of the local rule.
3. The remaining sections of the water hazard come within Rule 33-2; there is nothing about them requiring special treatment.

such as "Start of Lateral Water Hazard" and "End of Lateral Water Hazard."

If the latter method is used, the only note necessary on the score card is something like this:

"Hole No. X: Section of water hazard at left between large red stakes is a lateral water hazard."

It is no longer necessary to have a local rule to specify how the player may proceed if his ball be in a lateral water hazard, for this is now part of the basic Rules of Golf. Rule 33-3 provides:

"If a ball lie or be lost in a lateral water hazard, the player may, *under penalty of one stroke*, either:-

"a. Play his next stroke in accordance with Clause 2b of this Rule (*that is, under a stroke-and-distance procedure*),

or

"b. Drop a ball within two club-lengths of the margin of either side of the lateral water hazard, opposite the point where the ball last crossed the hazard margin. The ball must come to rest not nearer the hole."

Ball Drop

Suppose, in playing the hole sketched on the preceding page, your second shot went into the water hazard right behind the green. Immediately to the rear of the water hazard is a boundary. Thus, you are prevented from dropping a ball, under Rule 33-2a, so as to keep the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard between yourself and the hole. You could always, of course, proceed under Rule 33-2b — that is, the stroke-and-distance option, returning to the place from which you last played and dropping a ball there under penalty of a stroke.

But it never was a rigid principle of water hazard legislation that the player should lose distance as well as a penalty stroke. Therefore, the local committee would be within the spirit of the Rules if it were to adopt a local rule permitting a ball to be dropped in a special area near the water hazard, under penalty of one stroke.

Check List for Local Rules

The USGA Appendix to the 1952 Rules of Golf points out the following items for local committees to consider as possible subjects for local rules or other regulations:

1. Clarifying the status of sections of water hazards which may be lateral under Definition 14c and Rule 33-3.
2. Clarifying the status of objects which may be obstructions under Definition 20 and Rule 31.
3. Specifying the means used to define boundaries, hazards, water hazards, lateral water hazards, and ground under repair.
4. Preservation of the course, including turf nurseries and other parts of the course under cultivation on which play is prohibited.
5. Temporary conditions which might interfere with proper playing of the game, including mud and extreme wetness warranting cleaning the ball and/or lifting an embedded ball on specific individual days (*see detailed recommendations in Rules booklet*).
6. Accumulation of leaves.
7. Damage caused to the course by animals (other than as covered in Rule 32).
8. Snow and ice when it is preferred that they not be treated as casual water under Definition 8 and Rule 32.
9. Caddying double (*see detailed recommendations in Rules booklet*).
10. How to decide ties in handicap events (*see detailed recommendations in Rules booklet*).
11. Priority on the course (*see Etiquette in Rules booklet*).
12. Practice areas (*see Rules 36-4b and 37-3*).

The committee should first determine exactly what section of the hazard defies application of the basic water hazard rule. It should define that section distinctively, perhaps by green stakes — either a series of small ones, or two sets of large ones, one set at each end of the section.

Then the committee should prepare one or two "ball drop" areas — mown places, adjacent to the water hazard, on which a ball may be dropped and played. They should be marked with small signs "Ball Drop."

Finally, a local rule somewhat as follows should be adopted:

"Hole No. Y: Ball in water hazard between green stakes — A ball may be dropped, under penalty of one stroke, upon the nearer of the two areas designated 'Ball Drop.'"

Obstructions

Definition 20 in the new Rules provides:

"An 'obstruction' is anything artificial, whether erected, placed or temporarily left on the course.

"When walls, fences, stakes, railings or similar objects define the boundaries of the course, they are not obstructions, nor are artificially constructed roads and paths anywhere."

This rather brief definition has replaced an elaborate list of objects formerly set forth in the Rules as being artificial obstructions.

To avoid misunderstanding, the local committee should carefully examine its course to determine if any reasonable doubt could arise as to whether a particular object is or is not an artificial obstruction. In doing this, it should consider the possible application of Rule 31. Then, if it seems advisable, it might put a note like the following on the score card:

"Hole Z: The artificial shelter protecting the drinking fountain is an obstruction."

It should be noted that stakes and similar objects used to define boundaries of the course are not obstructions. Henceforth no relief is given from them without penalty; the ball must be played as it lies or be treated as unplayable. A player no longer has the right to remove a boundary marker to enable him to play a stroke; the course must always remain exactly as laid out for a given day or a given competition, insofar as boundaries are concerned.

But stakes used to mark hazards are obstructions.

Defining Boundaries, Hazards, etc.

The score card should be clear in specifying the means used to define boundaries, hazards, water hazards, lateral water hazards, and ground under repair.

For example, it might be stated that:

"Boundaries are defined by the inside edge of large white stakes or fence posts at ground level. (Such stakes or posts are not obstructions.)

"Water hazards are defined by

Rules Notes NOT to Use

In drafting text for the club score card, the local committee ought to avoid, at all costs, anything which contradicts the Rules of Golf.

Here are some horrible examples which should not be followed:

"Artificial obstructions — line of flight may be improved when obstruction interferes." (This couldn't possibly be operated fairly. See Rule 31.)

"Out of bounds — loss of distance only." (It's now stroke and distance uniformly.)

"Lost ball — drop ball where ball was lost." (Was it lost, or wasn't it? If it was, how do you know where? If you know where, then it wasn't lost in the first place.)

low white stakes. (Such stakes are obstructions.)"

Attention is called to Definitions 13, 14 and 21.

Earl Ross, who recently retired after a very successful administration as President of the Metropolitan Golf Association, New York, makes a timely suggestion about placement of out-of-bounds markers.

In view of the increased penalty for a ball out of bounds, he advises clubs to check their boundary markers and "place them as far back as possible from the edge of the fairway or rough. Maybe at some places they can widen it three yards, and at some other places ten yards. But whatever they can do to make it harder to go out of bounds, the number of penalties will be fewer."

Turf Nurseries

Does your course have a turf nursery, flower beds, or any similar area which it wishes to protect? If so, a local rule is needed. The ground under repair Rule (32) does not give real protection because its use is optional with the player.

The following mandatory sort of local rule will insure protection, or else the player is subject to penalty:

"Hole M: Ball in turf nursery to right must be lifted, without penalty, and dropped off the nursery as near as possible to the spot where it lay, but not nearer the hole."

Rewriting the Rules of Golf

It is always a temptation for a local committee to want to rewrite or revise

(Continued on Page 11)

Saucon Valley has felt that it could make a contribution by surrounding this tournament with an atmosphere wholly appropriate to an amateur event. You will note that we have no advertising in the tournament program. The Club will make no profit from the tournament. The food prices and the prices at the soft drink stands have been kept at normal levels. The Club has operated all of that itself rather than through concessionaires in order to keep control.

All of that emphasizes amateurism.

There is an honorable place, of course, for professional sport. Professional baseball is a great and constructive national institution. Professional golf is conducted on a high level. The players are a great credit to the sport.

There is a place for the professional and a place for the amateur, but the point is to keep the distinction sharp and clear.

I had that in mind when I was down at the Masters Tournament in Augusta last spring and talked with that greatest of amateurs, Bobby Jones. I asked him if he would be willing to write a piece for our program which would point out the place of the amateur and the place of the professional, what their separate fields are. He agreed, and his piece is in our program. It does the job beautifully. Everyone interested in sports should read it.

Here, this coming week, we are going to see the amateur end of the game. We at Saucon Valley will do our best to make this an outstanding example of what an amateur tournament can be.

Volunteer Officials

I was invited to make a few remarks on behalf of the Saucon Valley Club and why we were interested in this tournament, but any comment on amateurism would be wholly incomplete without due tribute to the Board of the United States Golf Association and its efficient staff headed by Joe Dey, its Executive Secretary.

Possibly some of you contestants may not realize that the Board of the USGA volunteer their time, paying all their own expenses, to the cause of amateur golf.

They are all busy men carrying heavy responsibilities in industry and other lines.

They run several tournaments a year and have frequent meetings, all as a contribution to the game of golf, taking nothing whatever for themselves. I can think of no finer example of public service, no finer contribution to our national sports. And their work goes on year after year.

(Addressing the USGA President:)

Mr. Standish, as long as the efforts of yourself and your associates continue, the high standard of amateurism in golf will continue to be an inspiration to amateur sport in all play throughout the country.

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Are Your Local Rules Necessary?

(Continued from Page 9)

or repeat some basic Rules of Golf on the club score card.

A better procedure would be for the club to furnish every member with a Rules book at the start of each season — and certainly at the start of this season, when a radically revised code has come into effect.

It is not an easy matter to rewrite a Rule of Golf into shorter or simpler form. It is practically impossible to do so and yet retain the full meaning of the Rule. There are many ifs and buts and exceptions throughout the Rules and, although we may deplore them, they are necessary.

If a club committee sets forth one basic Rule on its score card, it almost has a moral obligation to print them all, or else clutter up the score card with many of the more important Rules. But why do that when all Rules are important and when the club can readily provide a copy of the Rules book for every member to carry in his bag?

It is respectfully suggested that, on the subject of Rules, a score card should contain only the following:

“The Rules of the United States Golf Association Govern Play”

followed by such notes about defining boundaries and hazards and such local rules as may be deemed necessary.

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