

THE REFEREE

Decisions by the USGA and the R. and A. Rules of Golf Committees

Example of symbols: "USGA" indicates decision by the United States Golf Association. "R & A" indicates decision by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland. "52-1" means the first decision issued in 1952. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1952 Rules of Golf.

Scoring Wrong-Ball Penalty

USGA 52-4. Def. 22,28; R.21-3,27-1a,3

Q1: In stroke play, there is two strokes' penalty for playing wrong ball. Are these penalty strokes added to the player's strokes which he had taken *before* he played the wrong ball or are they added to all the strokes played by player including the strokes played with wrong ball?

A1: As Rule 21-3 provides, the two penalty strokes are added to the player's score for the hole. The score for the hole is the score made with a ball properly in play; it does not include strokes made with a wrong ball.

Dropping Wrong Ball Played from Hazard

Q2: If a player play a wrong ball in a hazard and said wrong ball is buried in sand, and he discovers that he has played wrong ball after he is out of hazard, is the wrong ball so played then replaced in trap in the same buried condition it was in before being played, or is it dropped?

A2: The ball must be dropped by its owner when the player who moved it is an outside agency — see Definition 22 and Rule 27-1a,3.

Definition of Four-Ball Match

Q3: In Definition 28, under "Sides and Matches" there are listed the different kinds of matches, and a "Four-Ball" match is listed as a match in which two play their better ball against the better ball of two other players. Nowhere among these definitions is there given any name for the most popular and almost universal form of play — a match with four balls where two players on one side, each playing one ball, play two players on the other side playing two balls, and scoring all *four* balls, not just the better of *two*. These four balls are scored sometimes as "best and worst" on one side against best and worst on the other side or "low and aggregate" on each side, but in either case *all four* balls are considered in the scoring. I would say that 90% of the four-ball matches, at least in the Mid-West, score all four balls and this is the only fair way where handicaps are not comparable. Don't you think there should be some name for the most popular game of all, in the Rule book?

A3: There are many methods of scoring points when four balls are played, but they all are four-ball matches for purposes of applying the Rules. It should be remembered that the

Rules of Golf are essentially a code by which to conduct play fairly. It is not considered to be their function to set forth the numerous schemes of point-scoring which are used in the various kinds of matches.

Questions by: FRED L. RIGGIN, SR.
PORT HURON, MICH.

Dropping Ball in Water Hazard

USGA 52-6. R.30, 33-2; LR

Q: In studying the 1952 Rules of Golf I find that I made a decision not in accordance with your Rules; and yet with equity and local conditions I feel my decision was right. Please give me your answer so that, if necessary, I can change my ruling.

Our course has a water hazard which varies from 100 yards to 250 yards in width. Depending on conditions there may be much, little or no water in it. With little or no water in the hazard, players take the short way to the hole, and if they do not get across the hazard are willing to accept the lie in the hazard for their second shot. It sometimes happens, however, that a ball fails by a few yards of getting out and ends up in water.

I ruled in this case that a player could drop back *any distance* he desired on the line of flight of the ball, with a one-stroke penalty.

Under Rule 33-2, the player does not have this option; he must either drop behind the hazard or go back to the tee, both of which are up to 250 yards away. It seems as though a player should have the privilege of dropping in the hazard with a one-stroke penalty as well as out of the hazard with one-stroke penalty. On our course a playable lie may frequently be found from a few yards to a hundred yards of where the ball lies. I don't believe Rule 33-2 was written with water hazards such as ours in mind.

Question by:

BRIG. GEN. STANLEY E. RIDDERHOF
USMC RET.
NEWPORT BEACH, CAL.

A: We understand that you permitted a ball to be dropped *in* the water hazard under penalty of one stroke, in relief of a ball already in the water hazard. This is not permitted by Rule 33-2.

The Rules prior to 1952 permitted a ball to be dropped, under penalty of one stroke, "in the hazard, keeping the spot at which the ball entered the water between himself and the hole." Recourse to that option was so very rare as to render it virtually useless.

The water hazard Rule is not intended to require that a player necessarily lose distance as well as a penalty stroke. Therefore, you would not breach the principles of the Rule if you were to adopt a local rule permitting a ball to be dropped *in* the water hazard, under penalty of one stroke, in relief of a ball already in the hazard. However, it should be specified that the ball should be dropped so as to keep the point where the original ball lay between the player and the hole; the "line of flight" would be an indeterminate and improper line along which to drop.

Attention is called to the fact that a provisional ball may be played for a ball which may be in a water hazard. See Rule 30, but particularly see Rule 30-3.

Stile Is Obstruction

USGA 52-8. D.20, R.31

Q: I would like to know if a stile attached to a boundary fence is an artificial obstruction or is it part of the boundary fence.

Question by: LARRY M. LAMBERGER, PRO.
PORTLAND GOLF CLUB
PORTLAND, OREGON

A: A stile is an obstruction under Definition 20. Relief from obstructions is provided for in Rule 31.

A boundary fence is not an obstruction. To reduce the possibility of inequities, the local committee could, by local rule, classify a stile as not an obstruction and thus give it the same status as the fence to which it is attached.

Bending Tree in Taking Stance

USGA 52-9. R. 17-3

Q: In match play A's ball comes to rest about 16 inches from a young tree, 3 or 4 feet in height, some 15 or 20 yards from the green. In taking his stance A finds it expedient to stand between the ball and the tree—the tree at his rear. Being crowded for space and in order to attain more swinging freedom, he also finds it expedient to press backward against the tree, and in consequence the tree is bent several degrees from its normal position.

Opponent B objects to this procedure on the theory that A in shifting backward and bending the tree is acquiring a more favorable stance for himself in an unfair manner, and that it is a violation of Rule 7 (3) of the 1951 Rules, which Rule states in effect that the player may not bend anything growing except to "fairly" take his stance.

B bases his argument upon the meaning of the word "fairly", which word he interprets as a restrictive term—that A is permitted to bend the tree but must do it in a "fair" manner, and not in an "unfair" manner. B claims that it is an unfair advantage for A to shift his feet and body rearward, exerting firm pressure on the tree and thereby gaining this more favorable position with relation to the lie of the ball.

A claims that he is clearly within his rights under the above Rule in bending the impediment to whatever degree he deems necessary to a satisfactory stance that will enable him to play his shot direct to the pin; and that he is not required to calculate and predetermine just what degree of tree pressure is either "fair" or "unfair" before he executes the shot—that there is no measuring stick that will tell him the dividing line between mild pressure that is fair and pronounced pressure that is unfair.

Hence this query: Does any special significance attach to this word "fairly"? Does it carry any hidden implication or restriction that pertains to the above situation?

Question by: C. R. L. CRENSHAW
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

A: No.

The language of Rule 17-3 in the 1952 code is slightly different from that of Rule 7 (3) in the 1951 code, but the intent is the same. Rule 17-3 provides:

"A player shall not improve, or allow to be improved, his line of play or the position or lie of his ball by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed or growing, except:—

"a. As may occur in the course of fairly taking his stance; or

"b. In making the stroke or the backward movement of his club for the stroke.

"The club may be grounded only lightly and must not be pressed on the ground."

The basic object of the Rule is to prohibit improving the position of the ball.

In the course of taking a reasonable stance, for example, the player might bend growing objects, such as tall grass, and as a consequence the line of play might be affected. The Rule excuses this provided it occurs *as an incident* in the course of taking the stance.

The player is entitled to take his stance fairly. The word "fairly" should be read in a normal sense. To put it in other words, the player may take a stance which is as reasonable as could be expected in the light of the ball's situation. This is no guarantee that he is to have a *perfect* stance; if that were so, the Rules might permit players to carry axes and sickles and to cut down bushes, grass and trees which happened to interfere with a perfect stance.

In short, the quality of the stance is bound to be affected by the general situation, and the player must accommodate himself to that general situation. He may not bend and twist it to suit his convenience.

Therefore, the term "fairly taking his stance" is a relative term, not an absolute one. The player is always limited by the main object of the Rule, which is to avoid improving the position of the ball except as may be done incidentally.

In the circumstances described, A could have taken his stance fairly without bending the young tree. A should be considered to have violated Rule 17-3 and to have lost the hole.

Replacing Ball in Bunker

USGA 52-12. R.23-2,33-1, 1e

Q: The identification of a ball buried in a bunker baffles me. If my opponent lifts a buried ball from the bunker to identify it as his and replaces it on the same spot but atop the sand which, of course, has closed up the hole, what recourse have I?

Question by: JOHN B. BOYLE
CINCINNATI, OHIO

A: When a ball is lifted for identification, Rule 23-2 requires that it be replaced on the spot from which it was lifted. This means that it must be replaced in its original lie. Rule 33-1 prohibits improving the lie of a ball in a hazard; however, if the ball be covered by sand, Rule 33-1e permits removing enough sand to enable the player to see the top of the ball.

Tree Basin Recommendations

USGA 52-13. D.13, 14; R.29-2, 32,33-2; LR

Q1: Please refer to Q. and A. No. 50-10 R. 7(4),LR. The Rules of Golf Committee published its approved methods for relief under local rules for tree-basins in the April 1950 issue of the USGA JOURNAL.

Are the then approved methods effective for 1952?

Will you please check the local rule that follows to see that the policy of the governing authority of the country is complied with, and if it meets the approval of the Rules of Golf Committee:

“Local Rule—Ball coming to rest within two club-lengths of any tree having a tree-basin may be lifted and dropped within two club-lengths from the trunk of the tree, in any direction, no nearer the hole. Penalty—one stroke.”

A1: Regarding tree basins, former recommendations are now superseded by following:

It is preferable that no relief be given other than as contained in unplayable ball Rule 29-2.

However, if local committee considers any other relief is advisable, USGA recommends following:

First, if tree basins or conditions they create are temporary, define areas as ground under repair—see Definition 13 and Rule 32.

Second, if conditions are permanent, define areas as water hazards—see Definition 14 and Rule 33-2.

Roads — No Relief

Q2: Attached is a drawing of the 11th fairway, across which is constructed a concrete road, approximately 170 yards from the tee.

According to our interpretation of Definitions 14a and 20 in the 1952 Rules of Golf, a road is deemed to be part of the course and the ball, therefore, must be played as it lies.

Is our interpretation correct?

If the answer is yes, will you please let me know whether the Rules of Golf Committee would recommend relief be provided by local rule and what such relief should be?

There are dirt shoulders adjacent to the edge of the concrete road which could render the ball unplayable.

A2: Roads are not hazards or obstructions and Rules of Golf do not give free relief therefrom. Rules of Golf Committee does not recommend local rule providing free relief. Suggest improve dirt shoulders and meanwhile define unplayable areas as ground under repair.

Questions by: ALBIN MARTINSON
SACRAMENTO, CAL.

Ball Moving at Address

R & A 52-3. Def. 1, 30. R. 25-1, 27-1d

Q: The answer to a question written to Golf Illustrated recently (Dec. 27, 1951, p. 349) concerning playing a moving ball has caused much discussion in this club. Some members maintain that whereas there is no penalty under Rule 25-1, there is a penalty under Rule 27-1d. Others accept the writer's answer that there is no penalty so long as the player keeps swinging. I can find no decision on the old Rule 13 which formerly applied. Will you kindly settle this point as soon as possible in order that peace may once again reign supreme within our portals.

Question by: CORLESTON GOLF CLUB
CORLESTON, ENGLAND

A: 1. If a player's ball when in play moves at any time after he has addressed it (see Definition 1), whether or not he has begun the stroke (see Definition 30) or the backward movement of his club for the stroke, he incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 27-1d. To this there is no exception. It should be noted that a ball is not in play on the teeing ground until the player has made a stroke at it.

2. If the movement referred to in paragraph 1 above occurs before the player begins the stroke or the backward movement of his club for the stroke, he must delay making his stroke until the ball has come to rest, otherwise he is guilty of a second infringement, i. e., playing while his ball is moving (see Rule 25-1); for this he incurs the additional penalty of two strokes in stroke play, in match play he loses the hole.

3. If the movement referred to in paragraph 1 above only begins after the player has begun his stroke or the backward movement for his stroke, he is considered to be unable to check his swing and so to avoid playing a moving ball; in these circumstances there is no penalty other than that referred to in paragraph 1.

Burrowing Animal

R & A 52-4. R. 31-2,32-1,8,37-7

Q. 1: Is a worm a burrowing animal within the meaning of Rule 32-1c? As we are troubled here with worm casts this point has, therefore, an important application and has been raised by many members. My Committee holds the

view that, basically, there are only two forms of life, animal and plant. If this view be accepted, and there is no tenable argument against it, a worm is clearly an animal. Equally clear, it is a burrowing animal. The consequence appears to be that, if on the putting green a worm cast intervene between a ball and the hole, the player has the right under Rule 32-1c to lift and place without penalty to obtain a clear line to the hole. My Committee feels that this construction cannot have been intended but is driven to the conclusion that it cannot be avoided. May I please have your views on the point?

A. 1: As Rule 32-1 mentions a bird and a reptile as well as an animal, the term animal cannot be taken to include the entire animal kingdom; it should be interpreted as covering only the mammalia, a group to which the worm does not belong.

(A worm and its cast are loose impediments under Def. 17—USGA)

Immovable Obstruction

Q. 2: Is the presence of an "immovable obstruction", such as, for example, a stone wall (not being a boundary wall), interference with a player's stroke within the meaning of Rule 31-2 when its position is such that it merely prevents his playing in the direction of the hole but does not in any way prevent his playing a shot sideways? This also has an important application to the condition prevailing here as we have a number of stone walls (not boundary walls) and stone buildings in the middle of our course.

A. 2: Yes.

Ball on Natural Floor

Q. 3: Is a player entitled to relief under Rule 31-2 when his ball lies "in" but not "on" or "touching" an "immovable obstruction"? There is a stone barn right in the middle of a fairway on this course. It has two open sides and two stone-built sides; it has a perfectly natural floor, partly of soil and partly of grass. The stone-built sides are at right angles to the line of the hole and are of such a length as to offer a complete obstruction to play anywhere near the line of the hole. The natural and grammatical construction of this rule seems to be that a player whose ball comes to rest **inside** the barn is not entitled to the relief afforded by this rule. My Committee is all the more concerned about this point as under the 1949 Rules relating to "obstructions" reference was made to a ball lying "in" an "immovable" obstruction; this word "in" has been omitted from the 1952 Rules.

A. 3: As the floor of a barn is part of a barn which is an immovable obstruction, a player whose ball lies on the floor is entitled to relief under Rule 31-2. The composition of the floor is immaterial.

Should an actual, not hypothetical, case occur in which the omission of the word "in" gives rise to difficulty, it should be reported to the Rules of Golf Committee.

Re-Taking Putt

Q. 4: Is it illegal to re-take a putt after holing out? I am asked to point out that Rules 8 and 37-3 are specifically, by note, related to each other. Rule 8 refers to "practice" during the play of a competition and Rule 37-3 to "practice" prior to the start of a competition. Clearly the latter does not apply to the point in question, and it is the submission of my Committee that the former does not apply either, as it refers in specific words to "practice" **during the play of a hole**. Clearly, a hole is not being played when the player has already holed out. We are thus compelled to rely on Rule 37-7 which prescribes a penalty for "undue delay". However, the wording is that "a player may not **delay play** by practicing". The operative words appear to be "delay play", and if this is so, there is nothing to prevent the re-taking of a putt if there are no players immediately behind and if there are players waiting on the next teeing ground. This point has been raised by a number of our members, as a national daily newspaper has recently stated that it is illegal to re-take a putt.

A. 4: Between play of two holes practice putts and chip shots around the tee are not prohibited by Rule 8, which deals with practice during play of hole. However, such practice might constitute delay in play under Rule 37-7.

Questions by: WIGAN GOLF CLUB
WIGAN, ENGLAND

Local Rule Unnecessary

R & A 52-7. R. 33-4

Q: We have in our local rules the following: "A ball lost in or near the river shall be deemed to be in the river." This has always been in force since the opening of the course, because of the winding nature of the river and the bushes and clumps of trees along the banks. Without the use of forward caddies at at least five points on the course, it is impossible to tell whether a ball has gone in the river or not. We should be greatly obliged if you will inform us whether we may keep this local rule.

Question by: UPMINSTER GOLF CLUB
UPMINSTER, ENGLAND

A: Rule 33-4 allows a player who is doubtful as to whether his ball is in a water hazard to play a provisional ball under Rule 30.

Note 1 to Rule 33-4 gives a player guidance as to procedure in the case you quote.

In view of this, the Rules of Golf Committee do not consider the retention of your local rule necessary but instead suggest that the area of the water hazard might be extended to cover the bushes, trees, etc., on its bank.