

# 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 Gol. 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.

### Taking Stance and Testing Hazard

USGA 52-17

R.33-1

**Q:** Will you kindly clarify Rule 33 regarding procedure in taking stance in sand trap?

Player claims that after taking stance in trap and digging feet in for such purpose, player is obliged to complete stroke. Player claims that after breaking surface of hazard to take stance and leaving this position to possibly change club or for some other reason, player has violated Rule 33 by testing depth of sand.

Question by: JIM ROONEY

FT. LAUDERDALE, FLA.

**A:** Rule 33-1a entitles the player to place his feet firmly in taking his stance. After so doing, the player is not obliged to complete the stroke. There is nothing to prevent him from leaving his position; he may, for instance, want to take an entirely different stance.

On the other hand, one of the objects of Rule 33-1, first paragraph, is to prohibit testing the condition of the hazard before making a stroke. Therefore, in taking or leaving a stance, a player should always comport himself in such a way as to gain no undue advantage, as by testing the condition of the hazard. If he does otherwise, he is subject to penalty for violation of Rule 33.

### Ball Lodged in Tree

USGA 52-18. D.13; R. 17-3,4; 22-2, 27-1c, 29-1, 32, 36-4c, 37-7

**Q1:** A ball lodges in a tree. As the player is climbing the tree to try to play a stroke, the ball drops to the ground.

**a.** Does the player sustain a penalty?

**b.** Suppose that while standing on the ground he purposely shakes the tree in trying to make the ball drop out of the tree. Is he penalized?

**c.** Is a player entitled to leave the ground and climb a tree in order to play a stroke? Is that building a stance within the meaning of Rule 17-4?

**A1a.:** Yes—one stroke under Rule 27-1c, as the ball must be deemed to have been moved accidentally.

**b.** Yes—two strokes under Rule 17-3, as the player's action is purposeful.

**c.** The player is entitled to try to climb a tree under the circumstances described. Rule 17-4 does not apply.

### Cancelling Day's Play

**Q2:** In addition to water-logged condition of the course and lightning, what are some justifi-

able reasons for cancelling a day's play in stroke play under Rule 36-4c? What about high winds, and physical danger to players?

**A2:** Good reasons would include very high winds, danger to players, lack of light, or any other unplayable condition.

**Q3: a.** Is it the committee's duty in stroke play to declare when a course is unplayable because of insufficient light?

**b.** In declaring the course unplayable and ordering a temporary suspension of play, should the committee give the players the option to discontinue immediately and mark the location of their balls or to play to any degree desired?

**c.** Instead of cancelling an entire incomplete round under Rule 36-4c, could the committee rule as follows: first, that all 18-hole scores returned shall stand; second, that 18-hole scores returned by a certain hour shall stand or that players finishing 18 holes shall have the choice of either "keeping" their scores or replaying the following day?

**d.** Could the committee declare an "official unplayable time", accept all 18-hole scores posted, and give all players still out on the course the option of either (1) lifting and marking their balls and resuming play the next day at the point where they stopped, or of (2) continuing on as far as they desired?

**A3: a.** Yes. See Rule 36-4c.

**b.** No. All play should be suspended as nearly simultaneously as reasonably possible; it is advisable to permit players to complete an unfinished hole.

**c.** Such a ruling would conflict with Rule 36-4c. See answer b.

**d.** Such a determination would conflict with Rule 36-4c. See answer b.

### Undue Delay Evidence

**Q4:** Unless there are officials on the course, who can prove and enforce Rule 37-7 regarding undue delay? Would you accept one or two players' protest or testimony?

**A4:** As a general proposition, two players' testimony would be adequate. In any case, the committee must weigh all available evidence in trying to arrive at a fair decision.

### Backswing Breaks Twigs

**Q5:** On a practice backswing, is it a violation of Rule 17-3 to break twigs from trees?

**A5:** Yes, if the position of the ball is improved.

### Cracks in Earth

**Q6:** What rules apply to cracks in the earth, such as may be caused by intense rays from the

sun; also to tracks across a course made by vehicles?

**A6:** The Rules of Golf do not give relief without penalty unless a specific area is classed as ground under repair—see Definition 13 and Rule 32; in such case, the classification should be temporary and should be removed when the area is restored to proper condition.

#### Dropping Ball in Hazard

**Q7:** A ball played from a bunker goes out of bounds. The player drops a ball on a bank of the bunker but outside the confines of the hazard; he drops it in such a way that the ball rolls into the bunker and comes to rest near the place where the original ball had lain. However, had he dropped the ball in the bunker, it probably would have become partly buried in sand. Did the player drop the ball correctly?

**A7:** No. The player was obliged to drop the ball in the hazard as near as possible to the spot from which the original ball was played. See Rules 29-1a and 22-2. The penalty in match play is loss of hole and in stroke play two strokes.

#### Ball Marks on Green

USGA 52-20. Et. 7; R. 35-1b; LR

**Q:** I would like to have a ruling on how ball marks on the green are treated, not only those made by the player's ball but also the ball pits made by players ahead of him and who failed to repair same. Is the player permitted to repair or level out the ball mark before putting? What is the rule if the player's ball mark is between the ball and the hole—that is, directly in his line? If he is allowed to repair same, let me know in what manner. Will this have to be covered by a local rule?

Question by: AL ESCALANTE, PRO.

MEXICO CITY COUNTRY CLUB  
MEXICO, D.F.

**A:** The Rules of Golf do not give relief. A local rule designed to give relief would conflict with the Rules of Golf.

Rule 35-1b prohibits touching the line of putt. A basic general theory of the game is that you play the course as you find it.

Section 7 of Etiquette provides in part that damage to the putting green made by the ball or the player should be carefully repaired *after* the players have holed out. In USGA Championships members of the club's greenkeeping staff repair ball marks after a group has holed out and before the next group plays to the putting green.

On specific days when conditions warrant, it is sometimes advisable to adopt a local rule giving relief for a ball embedded in its own pit-mark—see recommendations for local rules on page 58 of the 1952 Rules of Golf booklet.

#### Dropping from Lateral Water

USGA 52-21

R. 33-2,3

**Q:** We have several holes with parallel water hazards. Would you please clarify Rule 33 for us to this extent: when a ball enters a lateral

water hazard, is it permissible to apply Note 2, Page 40, that states: "There is no limit to how far behind a water hazard a ball may be dropped"?

Question by: PAUL L. SMITH, CHAIRMAN

GOLF COMMITTEE  
THE ZANESVILLE COUNTRY CLUB  
ZANESVILLE, OHIO

**A:** The note in question refers to Rule 33-2a, which provides for dropping a ball *behind* a water hazard.

With reference to lateral water hazards, Rule 33-3b is specific in requiring that a ball be dropped within two club-lengths of the hazard margin, etc.

#### Ball Not Replaced in Four-Ball

USGA 52-22

R.22-2, 23, 40-3g

**Q:** In a four-ball match last year my ball was on the green some 10 feet short of the cup. One of the opponents being some 30 yards short of the green, with my ball in his line to the pin, asked me to mark my ball, which I did and I knocked my ball to one side some 10 feet from the line of his approach instead of picking it up.

With my ball lying at the place where I had knocked it aside, without thinking I lined it up and putted. Just after hitting the putt, I looked up and saw the coin I had used as a mark and realized I had played the stroke from the wrong position. Immediately I called attention to what I had done, otherwise I do not believe it would have been noticed.

My opponent said I had lost the hole, which rather embarrassed me. Instead of insisting on what I thought was my right to play another shot from the spot I had marked, counting the stroke I had played from the wrong position, I picked up my ball and conceded the hole.

Needless to say I missed the putt that was made from the wrong position, it being some 10 feet farther from the cup than was my mark.

Question by: C. R. WHITE

DODGE CITY, KANSAS

**A:** As you did not replace the ball on the spot from which it was lifted, you violated Rule 22-2. You therefore disqualified yourself from the hole; but the penalty did not apply to your partner—see Rule 40-3g.

In knocking your ball aside instead of lifting it, you violated Rule 23 and were subject to penalty had your opponent entered a claim. To do other than actually lift the ball in such circumstances could raise question as to whether the player were testing the putting surface or taking a practice stroke or resorting to a device for cleaning the ball.

The same rulings would have been made under the 1951 Rules, although the Rules references have been changed.

#### Determining where Ball Crossed Margin

USGA 52-25

R.33-3

**Q:** The new lateral water hazard rule is almost unapplicable for at least one water hazard

here. We drive almost directly down the length of a ditch. It would take a Solomon to decide when the ball crossed the margin on the hazard (first, last or any time) for dropping purposes. We long have had a local rule there to drop in "fairway" side opposite where ball has come to rest, taking the one-stroke penalty. If you now play this hole under a strict interpretation, the player nearly always will lose the length of a full tee shot—though an erratic one. And it's certainly impossible to drop properly under regular, old water hazard rule. So I am afraid the lateral water hazard rule won't help here, in this particular instance.

Question by: BOB PHILLIPS  
BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

**A:** Although it may be almost impossible to determine the precise point where a ball last crosses the margin of any water hazard, it is possible to come reasonably close to doing so in most cases. It is preferable to the practice you describe.

You say you permit dropping a ball opposite where the ball came to rest in the ditch. Suppose the ditch were full of water—how could you tell where the ball were? Most water hazards do contain water, and most balls which enter water hazards become lost therein. The point of last crossing the margin is therefore the best test.

Suppose a water hazard contained a swift-flowing stream: it might be possible for the stream to carry the ball out of bounds, or far beyond the point where it was sent by the impetus of the player's stroke.

In view of all the considerations, the last point of crossing is considered to be not only the fairest but also the only practical test.

**Fourteen-Club Rule**

USGA 52-26  
R.3, 11-3, 36-5

**Q:** May I please have a ruling on the following:

A and B are playing a match. The day before, a match had been called because one player had 15 clubs in her bag. Naturally, the next day every one was conscious of the 14-club rule. In removing clubs from the trunks of cars, the attendant stuck a club in A's bag which was lying loose in her car. On the fifth hole A noticed the extra club and immediately called the match on herself. B refused to accept the disqualification, maintaining that A had not used the extra club (a brassie), which was true. B declared the match still alive and both players continued to play. The committee ruled A disqualified and would not accept B's contention that the match was still alive because of extenuating circumstances. B then declared she was disqualified as she had not taken the disqualification at the time it was discovered but that both A and B continued to play the match, with B 1 up at the turn only because A was upset over the illegal club.

Question by: MRS. ROSS LEWIN  
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

**A:** The committee's decision was final; see Rule 11-3.

A violated Rule 3, the penalty for which is disqualification.

As far as the competition was concerned, the match ended when the violation was discovered, and therefore the subsequent actions of the players had no bearing on the result.

However, under Rule 36-5, the committee could have waived or modified the penalty against A in view of the unusual circumstances.

**Out of Bounds from Water**

USGA 52-28  
R.22-1b, 29-1, 33-2a

**Q:** Player hit his second shot into a water hazard, short of the green. The water was shallow, and he elected to play it out. He hit it too strongly, going over the green and out-of-bounds.

Now, the out-of-bounds shot costs him two strokes and makes him 4. Then what? I assume he would have the privilege of dropping without further penalty in the water as near as possible to previous lie, or dropping behind the creek (under Rule 33-2a) at the cost of another stroke. Right?

Then I wondered whether Rule 22 would give him the right to place the ball in the water (in the event he again wanted to try to play it out) on the theory that it would be impossible to drop it without the ball coming to rest nearer the hole. It wouldn't be good golf, of course, but there was much argument over rights, etc.

Question by: FRED BYROD  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

**A:** The player's third stroke went out of bounds. He was then obliged to proceed under Rule 29-1, dropping a ball in the water hazard as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played, and adding a penalty stroke to his score for the hole (he now lies 4).

If the ball when dropped in the water hazard should come to rest nearer the hole, the player would be obliged to re-drop it, without penalty. If it were not possible, because of the configuration of the ground, to prevent the ball from rolling nearer the hole, the player would be obliged to place it as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played, without further penalty. See Rule 22-1b.

If the player did not care to play the ball from the water hazard, he could drop a ball behind the water hazard under Rule 33-2a, under penalty of an additional stroke. His score then would be 5 before he played the next stroke.

**Practice on Day of Competition**

USGA 52-34  
R. 8, 37-3, 7. Et. 4.9.

**Q:** Will you please help me with a clarifica-

tion of the Rules as concern practice strokes during a competitive round.

We know (per Rule 8) that a player may not play a practice stroke during the play of any hole.

We know, also, that according to Rule 37-7, a player is liable to penalty if his practice strokes between holes delay play.

What exactly constitutes "delay"? Suppose that another match is held up on the next subsequent tee, and the hole behind is void of players. Then, any amount of time may be available for practice.

Now, our big question is, where does Rule 37-3 fit this picture? According to this Rule, a player is liable to disqualification for practice on a course over which the competition is being held. This Rule also states, "On any day of a stroke competition." Can this be interpreted to mean that any practice stroke during a round is also a practice stroke within the meaning of Rule 37-3?

Question by: BOB ROLLASON  
LAKEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB  
WESTLAKE, OHIO

**A:** Rule 8 provides: "During the play of a hole, a player shall not play any practice stroke." The purpose of this Rule is to prohibit any type of practice during play of a hole. In match play, the play of a hole is ended when the result of the hole has been determined, as provided in Rule 6. In stroke play, the play of a hole is ended when the competitor concerned has holed out.

Rule 37-7 provides: "Players shall at all times play without undue delay. Between the completion of a hole and driving off the next tee, a player may not delay play by practicing or in any other way." The purpose of this Rule is to prohibit undue delay of any type in completing a match or round. The existing circumstances must govern in determining what constitutes "delay." The mere act of engaging in reasonable practice either on the putting green or around the tee does not in itself constitute "delay," although the player should, of course, be mindful of Etiquette 9 and 4 and should not endanger other persons. For example, such practice could be of such a nature as to have no effect whatever upon any other player or upon the progress of a competition. On the other hand, if two players in a match had the course entirely to themselves, one could conceivably violate the Rule by delaying play.

Rule 37-3 provides in part: "On any day of a stroke competition, a competitor shall not practice on a course over which the competition is being held except in the area defined by the Committee as practice ground or as the Committee may otherwise permit." The purpose of this Rule is to prohibit practice on the competition course before starting or after finishing a round, unless the Committee permits otherwise.

### Touching Sand in Bunker on Backswing

R & A 52-9  
R. 33-1

**Q:** In the event of a player when taking back the club in a sand bunker accidentally touching the sand before the stroke is made, is a penalty incurred?

I have pointed out to one of my lady members, Rule 33-1b clearly states the position, but she is not satisfied, and requests me to ask the opinion of the Rules of Golf Committee.

Question by: SECRETARY,  
HESWALL GOLF CLUB  
CHESHIRE, ENGLAND

**A:** Rule 33-1 clearly stipulates that "before making a stroke" (Def. 30), the player shall not touch the ground with a club. The exception under Rule 33-1b applies only to a fixed object or growing substance. A penalty is therefore incurred.

### Defining Extent of Water Hazard

R & A 52-13.  
R. 36-6.

**Q:** Crossing this course is a stream or ditch, the banks of which are from 6 to 10 feet deep, steep but mainly covered with grass and small bushes. On an average the banks are about 8 or 10 feet apart at the top and the water at the bottom runs in a cut channel about 3 feet wide.

The majority of the members of my committee insist that the only part of this feature which is a water hazard is the cut channel at the bottom.

Consequently, in my committee's view, a ball lying at any of the positions marked 'x' in the accompanying diagram (above the water line—Ed.) is not in the water hazard, and, if deemed unplayable, incurs the appropriate penalty, unless it be interfered with by the bridge, when it may be dropped clear without penalty.

It is my contention that a ball lying in these positions is within the margin of the water hazard, in which case the interference of the bridge is immaterial, and the ball may be dropped behind the hazard under penalty of one stroke.

It appears to me to be necessary to define the margins of our local water hazards so that argument cannot arise, and I will be most grateful for your advice in this matter.

Question by: SECRETARY,  
THE EAST BERKS GOLF CLUB  
CROWTHORNE, ENGLAND

**A:** Rule 36-6 states that it is the duty of the Committee to define accurately the extent of water hazards where there is any doubt. See also Def. 14b.

It is customary in such cases as you quote to include the banks of a water hazard within the defined boundaries of the hazard, so that the player has the option of playing the ball as it lies or proceeding under Rule 33-2a or b.