

Up a Tree with the Rules of Golf

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It was one of the brighter moments during the Amateur Championship last August at the Seattle Golf Club. Paul H. Johanson, a nimble-witted student at the University of Washington, was seeking some Rules of Golf gospel from Richard S. Tufts, a Vice-President of the USGA. The conversation went something like this:

Player: "Can I climb the tree?"

USGA man: "Nothing to stop you."

Player: "Suppose the ball moves while I'm climbing?" and he gave a longing look up into the branches of the big evergreen; high overhead, you could see a little white golf ball nestling.

USGA man: "In that case, one stroke penalty — see Rule 27-1c about moving a ball accidentally."

Player: "Can I throw my club up at it?"

USGA man: "Loss of hole if you do — can't improve a ball's position or lie by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed or growing (Rule 17-3); also, a ball can't be touched purposely and must be played as it lies (Rule 16); also, have to strike at ball fairly with the head of the club (Rule 19-1). Can I help further?"

Player (gracefully lofting mental stymie): "Can I shake the tree?"

USGA man: "Yes, but it would cost you loss of hole (Rule 17-3)."

Fantastically enough, a tall step-ladder happens to be in the vicinity.

Player: "Can I stand on that ladder and play the ball?"

USGA man: "Loss of hole for building a stance (Rule 17-4)."

Player: "Can I use the ladder to help climb the tree?"

USGA man: "Why not?"

Player does climb ladder. Climbs out on limb above the limb on which ball is resting, ball remaining quite still. Calls out:

"Fore below!"

Plays ball to ground. Halves hole. (Later wins match, 1 up).

USGA man polishes his badge and strolls off.

Removing Flagstick in Match Play

On the 12th hole of the final at Seattle, Al Mengert played a pitch-and-run from about 30 yards from the hole. The flagstick was unattended. The ball on first bounce struck the flagstick about a foot above the ground, and dropped into the hole for a winning birdie 3.

Jack Westland had failed to exercise his right to have the flagstick removed, under Rule 34-2c. Fortunately for him, the incident did not materially affect the ultimate result of 3 and 2 for Jack.

The Rules contain many rights for players, as well as prohibitions. It pays to protect your rights.

Playing Wrong Ball

Charles Coe and Frank Stranahan were partners representing the United States in a three-ball "sixsome" against Canada and Mexico in the Americas Cup Match at Seattle just before the Amateur. On the 35th hole Stranahan played a wrong ball (not in a hazard); under Rule 21-2, the United States pair lost the hole. They lost their matches by 1 down to both their Canadian and Mexican opponents.

A note preceding Rule 21 advises: "The responsibility for playing his own ball rests with the player. Each player should put an identification mark on his ball."

Touching Sand in Bunker with Club

During the Amateur a referee warned a player that in addressing the ball in a couple of bunkers his club came so close to touching the sand that it was almost impossible to be sure whether it did touch the sand or not.

The player objected to the warning,

YOUNG MAN IN SEARCH OF A BIRDIE?



Paul H. Johanson, of Seattle, actually is attempting a stance 20 feet up in a Douglas fir at the Seattle Golf Club during the Amateur Championship. The ball can be seen at the extreme right, below Johanson. He played it out of the tree and got a half on the hole in his third-round match against Arnold Blum, of Macon, Ga., which he won, 1 up.

saying his club had not touched the sand at address and, that being so, there was no proper occasion for a warning.

The referee pointed out that a player should play in such manner as to leave no doubt as to whether he has infringed a Rule or not.

Boundary Fence not Obstruction

The 16th hole at the Waverley Country Club in Portland, Ore., is 212 yards, long, downhill, and a few yards behind the putting green is a boundary fence of wire mesh.

The fence had not a little to do with deciding some matches in this year's Women's Amateur Championship. On several occasions balls overran the green and fetched up a few inches in front of the fence.

Consequently, questions arose as to whether the fence was an obstruction and whether the players were entitled to lift and drop without penalty as provided in Rule 31-2.

The answer was no, they couldn't lift. A boundary fence is excluded from classification as an obstruction under Definition 20.