

# THE REFEREE

Decisions by the  
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. "53-1" means the first decision issued in 1953. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1953 Rules of Golf.

## Provisional Is Ball in Play when Drop Renders Original Unplayable

USGA 52-80

R. 29-2a, 30-1, 31-2

**Q:** A ball is struck toward a part of the course where it may be unplayable. The player plays a provisional ball, as provided in Rule 30-1.

The first ball is found to be touching a pipe. The player lifts it without penalty and drops it in accordance with Rule 31-2. The ball comes to rest in an unplayable lie.

The player abandons the first ball and contends that he may now play the provisional ball. Is he right?

Question by: S. H. KUHN

BONNIE BRIAR COUNTRY CLUB  
LARCHMONT, N. Y.

**A:** Yes. In equity, lifting and dropping the first ball under Rule 31-2 constituted an extension of the stroke played with that ball. When it became unplayable, the player in order to proceed under Rule 29-2a would have had to return to the spot from which the original ball was played (not the spot from which it was lifted). As he had already played the provisional ball from that spot, the provisional ball must be continued in play.

## Balls Striking Ball Hit Provisionally

USGA 52-82

D. 22. R. 26-1a, 2a, 30-2

In regard to the Rule 30-1d (a provisional ball is never an outside agency), I should like to cite these examples.

**Q1:** A player makes a shot which lands in the rough 250 yards from the tee. He elects to play a provisional ball and that shot lands 200 yards from the tee. He plays the provisional ball a second time, and this time the ball comes to rest 150 yards ahead of his original ball. He finds he can play his original ball. He neglects to retire the provisional ball from play. He makes a stroke with the original ball which strikes the provisional ball. Does the player incur a penalty? Does Rule 26-3 apply?

**A1:** No. When the player elected to play his original ball, the ball which he had played provisionally was automatically retired from play (Rule 30-2). The latter ball therefore was no longer a provisional ball but an outside agency (Definition 22).

It is not necessary to retrieve one ball before playing the other in proceeding under Rule 30-2, and in the case you describe it would have resulted in considerable and unnecessary delay.

When the player's original ball then struck the other ball, it was a rub of the green and Rule 26-1a governed. The other ball is not considered to be a part of the player's equipment as contemplated by Rule 26-2a since it was not within his immediate possession or control.

**Q2:** The provisional ball is still in play (the player has not reached the spot where his original ball came to rest). A competitor's ball strikes the provisional ball!

a) Does Rule 27-3 apply?

b) An opponent's ball strikes the provisional ball. Does Rule 27-2b apply?

**A2:** a) Yes, if the provisional ball was at rest.

b) Yes, if the provisional ball was at rest.

**Q3:** The provisional ball should have been retired from play but was not. A competitor's ball strikes the provisional ball. Does Rule 26-3b apply? An opponent's ball strikes the provisional ball. Does Rule 26-2b apply?

**A3:** See Answer 1 above.

Questions by: MRS. C. L. GRAHAM  
LONG LAKE, MINN.

### Handicap Found to Be Incorrect

USGA 52-85

R. 11-1

**Q:** Handicaps at our club are given by a handicap chairman from scores turned in by players. A asked the chairman if her handicap was not too high and was told it was correct. With this handicap, A entered a tournament and won two matches, thereby placing her winner of her flight. After the tournament, the two defeated players checked A's scores and found the handicap chairman had made a mistake and that A had played with too high a handicap. A was asked to replay her two matches.

Can a player's handicap be challenged after the tournament has been played? Will you refer me to the rule which governs this incident?

Question by: MRS. L. C. YATES  
ROANOKE, VA.

**A:** In the absence of a claim entered as provided in Rule 11-1, the matches stand as played. However, there is nothing in the Rules which should deter the winner from acceding to a request by the Committee that the matches be replayed as a matter of good sportsmanship.

### Cleaning and Replacing Ball on Putting Green

USGA 52-86

R. 21-1, 23-3, 28 App. 5

**Q:** The general practice among players at our club is to mark the ball on the putting green, lift it and clean it by hand or replace it with a new ball for putting. We would appreciate your interpretation whether or not a ball on the putting green can be lifted, cleaned or exchanged for a new ball.

Question by: J. D. LAUX  
ITHACA, N. Y.

**A:** The practice you cite is contrary to the Rules of Golf.

Rule 23-3 provides: "A ball lifted from a water hazard, casual water, ground under repair, or under Rule 32 may be cleaned; otherwise, during the play of a hole a player may not clean a ball, except to the extent necessary for identification or if permitted by Local Rule."

When a player lifts his ball on the putting green in accordance with a Rule of Golf and there is no Local Rule which permits balls to be cleaned, it is incumbent on the player to handle his ball in such a way as to leave no question as to whether he may be cleaning it in violation of Rule 23-3.

This Association approves a Local Rule permitting the cleaning of a ball on the putting green only on specific days when temporary conditions, including mud and extreme wetness, interfere with proper playing of the game (see USGA Appendix 5 and suggested Local Rules on page 58 of 1952 Rules of Golf booklet).

Rule 21-1 provides that a player must hole out with the ball driven from the tee, except under certain conditions not pertinent to your question. Rule 28 permits the replacement of a ball which has become unfit for play, but Note 1 under that Rule specifies that mud or loose impediments adhering to a ball do not make it unfit for play, within the meaning of the Rule.

### Player May Change Clubs between 18-Hole Rounds

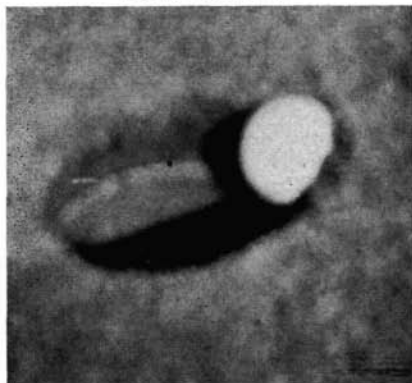
USGA 52-87

D. 29, R. 3

**Q:** In the semi-finals of a tournament in which thirty-six holes were to be played, a player wanted to exchange a club at the end of the first eighteen holes. What is the correct ruling?

Question by: NORMAN B. BEECHER  
BILTMORE FOREST COUNTRY  
CLUB  
BILTMORE, N. C.

**A:** It is permissible to change clubs between eighteen-hole rounds in a thirty-six-hole match. Rule 3 is applicable only during a "stipulated round," and Definition 29 provides: "The 'stipulated round' consists of playing the eighteen holes of the course in their correct sequence, unless otherwise authorized by the Committee." The latter phrase only authorizes a Committee to alter the sequence in which the holes shall be played.

**BALL HOLED?**

**Definition 4 of the Rules of Golf provides: "A ball is 'holed' when it lies within the circumference of the hole and all of it is below the level of the lip of the hole."**

**Teed Ball not in Play  
until Stroke Is Made at It**

USGA 52-88  
D. 5

**Q:** Rule 14 says that if a ball, when not in play, fall off a tee or be knocked off a tee by the player in addressing it, it may be re-teed without penalty. The words "when not in play" raised a question at our club. On the third hole a player drove out of bounds. He teed up another ball and in the act of addressing it touched it so it fell off the tee. What is the penalty, if any?

Question by: FRANK ROSS  
HARTFORD, CONN.

**A:** There is no penalty, because a teed ball is not in play until a stroke has been made at it. Definition 5 provides: "A ball is 'in play' as soon as the player has made a stroke on the teeing ground. It remains in play as his ball until holed out, except when it is out of bounds, lost, or lifted in accordance with the Rules or Local Rules."

**Loose Impediment in Hazard  
when Ball Is not in Hazard**

USGA 52-89  
D. 17, R. 17-3, 18-1

**Q:** A player's ball lies in the fairway on the edge of a trap which stands between the player's ball and the hole. The player decides to execute his shot to the hole by putting through the trap. A small, loose pebble in the trap makes this stroke hazard-

ous. Can the player push the pebble into the sand so that it cannot interfere with the ball's subsequent roll through the trap?

Question by: WILLIAM T. ELMER  
FREDERICKSBURG, VA.

**A:** No. Rule 17-3 prohibits a player from improving his line of play by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed, with certain exceptions which are not pertinent to this case. Sand is "fixed" and may not be pushed down in the manner proposed. The penalty for a violation of Rule 17-3 is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play.

The lifting of a loose impediment in a hazard, when the ball is not in a hazard, is, however, expressly permitted by Rule 18-1, and a pebble, or small stone, is a loose impediment (Definition 17).

While the player in question would, therefore, incur a penalty if he pushed down the surface of the hazard in his line of play, he would not incur a penalty if he simply removed a loose impediment from his line of play.

**Ball Comes to Rest  
on Ball outside Match**

USGA 52-90  
R. 24-1b, 2, 3

**Q:** A's ball came to rest upon a golf ball semi-buried in long grass and presumably a lost ball, at least not in play in his match. If A moves his own ball in removing the other ball, is there a penalty involved? If so, what is the penalty?

Question by: MRS. BEN DOLP  
PORTLAND, OREGON

**A:** As the ball was outside the match, it may be lifted without penalty as provided in Rule 24-1b for match play or Rule 24-2 for stroke play. If the player's own ball be accidentally moved in the process, he incurs no penalty and must replace his ball; see Rule 24-3.

**Ball Lodges in Flag**

USGA 53-1  
D. 20; R. 31-1

**Q:** A player hit his tee shot on a short hole and the ball hit the flag. The flag wrapped around the ball holding it there. Will you please explain what should be done in this case?

Question by: HENRY LINDNER  
AUGUSTA, GA.

**A:** A flagstick is an obstruction (Defini-

tion 20) and Rule 31-1 applies. The ball may be placed on the putting green as near as possible to the spot directly beneath the fold of the flag in which it lay; however, it may not be placed in the hole, as Rule 1 provides that the ball must be played into the hole by strokes.

#### Ball Adheres to Club

USGA 53-2  
R. 26-1b

**Q:** My shot to the green hit the flag and bounced into a sand trap which was scarcely four feet away from the pin. There my ball was lodged against an embankment about a foot high. I opened a 9-iron and took a hefty cut at my ball. One of my feet was on the green while the other was in the trap. After my swing, I saw no ball, yet it wasn't on the green. It was on my club, held firmly by wet red clay.

Question by: MRS. VERA LAKE  
SHREVEPORT, LA.

**A:** Rule 26-1b governs. This provides that the player shall, in a hazard, drop a ball as near as possible to the spot where the object was when the ball lodged in it, without penalty.

#### Tee Not Obstruction

R & A 52-41  
D. 20

**Q:** A ball comes to rest near the sleepers shoring up a tee four feet high, bordered on one side by an out-of-bounds railway fence and on the other by a cart track or rough roadway, formerly a hazard. A green lies near the roadway on the side remote from the tee. Whilst the player cannot make a shot direct to the green, he can play away. My committee would like to know whether Rule 31-2 applies in this case.

Can built-up tee with sleeper supports at the sides be regarded as an immovable artificial obstruction? Would a built-up tee minus timber supports come under the heading "artificial"?

Question by: ABERDOVEY GOLF CLUB  
ABERDOVEY, MERIONETHSHIRE

**A:** As a teeing ground is an integral part of the course, it can never be regarded as an immovable obstruction if built up, even if riveted with timber supports.

#### Penalty after Half Is Earned

R & A 52-85  
Rule 6-2

**Q:** A and B were playing C and D in a mixed foursome. Both balls were on the

green, A and B on the edge of the green and C and D within a few feet of the hole. A putted to within a few inches of the hole, C conceded the next putt and A picked their ball up. Before proceeding to putt, C asked A how many they had taken, and A replied, "Five." C and D were due a stroke at this hole and, as they had already played 6, assumed they had lost the hole, picked up and proceeded to walk off the green. B at this point corrected A's statement and admitted to being down in 6. C then replaced their ball as near as possible to the original lie, putted and missed his putt. Who incurs a penalty and what is the penalty?

**A:** A and B incurred a penalty under Rule 10-2 and should have conceded the half of the hole to their opponents (Rule 6-2).

Question by: MALONE GOLF CLUB  
BELFAST, NO. IRELAND

#### Hole Made by Greenkeeper Defined

R & A 52-94  
Def. 13

**Q:** Definition 13 — "Hole made by a greenkeeper."

Rule 32-1c — "Ground under repair."

Is an old golf hole made by the greenkeeper "ground under repair" (a hole made by a greenkeeper) under Definition 13?

May Rule 32-1c be applied when the turf used to make up the old golf hole has sunk or shrunk through drought or other outside agency?

RHOS AND PENRHYN  
GOLF CLUB  
LLANDUDNO, CAERNARVON-  
SHIRE

**A:** A hole made by a greenkeeper as contemplated by Definition 13 is either a hole as defined in Definition 15 or a hole dug on the course for any special reason. An imperfectly refilled hole, repaired by a greenkeeper, does not come under either category. Rule 32-1c does not apply.

#### Testing Rough

R & A 53-2  
R. 8

**Q:** In regard to Rule 17, is it permissible, when playing a ball in the rough, firstly to test the strength of the rough by swinging the club either in the direction of the hole or otherwise?

Question by: STOCKPORT GOLF CLUB  
STOCKPORT, CHESHIRE

**A:** Yes, provided that in doing so the lie of the ball is not improved. Note to Rule 8 refers.