



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.

Dropped Ball Strikes

Player, Caddie, Clubs or Opponent

USGA 53-14

R. 22-1a, b

Q 1: The player drops a ball as provided in Rule 22-1a. The ball comes to rest against the heel of a shoe of the player. Thus far there is no penalty, as Rule 22-1a provides in part: "If the ball touch the player, there is no penalty."

However, when the player steps away in a normal manner, the ball, which had been resting against his shoe, moves. Is the player subject to penalty under Rule 27-1c for accidentally causing the ball to move?

A 1: No.

Q 2: If the player is not penalized under Rule 27-1c for accidentally causing the ball to move, I wonder whether the player's shoe is deemed to be an obstruction and whether the player therefore must drop the ball again under Rule 31-1.

A 2: Rule 22-1b provides that a ball is in play when dropped and shall not be re-dropped except in specific cases, of which the present case is not one.

Q 3: What Rules apply when a dropped ball rolls and strikes the following (but does not roll into a hazard or out of bounds or nearer the hole):

- The player's caddie.
- The player's bag of clubs, which is lying on the ground.
- The opponent.

A 3: There is no penalty in any case. Under Rule 22-1a, if the ball touch the player, there is no penalty, and the same principle applies to all players, caddies and equipment concerned.

Rule 26 does not apply because the ball was not in motion in the sense intended by the Rule. If it were otherwise, the player would be penalized under Rule 26-2a if the ball when dropped were to touch him, but Rule 22-1a specifically supersedes 26-2a.

Rule 27 does not apply because the ball was not at rest.

Second Stroke Enters Water From Side Nearest Green

USGA 53-16

R. 33-2, LR

Q: A drove over a water hazard and over the green. He then played his second shot, which skidded back across the green and into the water hazard, which is about 30 yards wide, in front of the green. Please advise where A plays his next shot.

Question by: JAMES D. FOGERTY
SUNSET COUNTRY CLUB
SAPPINGTON, MO.

A: The player has two alternatives under Rule 33-2.

(1) He may drop a ball under penalty of one stroke behind the water hazard, keeping the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard between himself and the hole. This would require him to go to the side of the water hazard

nearest to the tee and attempt to cross it again with his fourth stroke.

(2) He may drop a ball under penalty of one stroke as near as possible to the spot from which he played his second stroke. His next stroke, in this case too, would be his fourth.

If the water hazard in front of the green were so large that it would be contrary to the interests of fair and expeditious play to require a player to attempt to cross a second time, you might establish a ball-drop area on the side of the water hazard nearest the green but not nearer the hole, and adopt a local rule which would permit a player to play from that area if his ball had crossed the water hazard on his first stroke and entered it from the side nearest the green on a subsequent stroke. However, such a local rule would not seem appropriate where the water hazard is only thirty yards wide.

Relief Under Obstruction Rule Cannot Be Denied

USGA 53-17
D. 20, R. 31-2, LR

Q: Our practice putting green is very close to our ninth green, to be exact 14 feet 6 inches. There is a metal-pipe railing between the practice green and the ninth green, and a sidewalk next to the practice green.

A player's ball stopped against the sidewalk, exactly 30 inches in front of the pipe railing, which did not permit the player to take a backswing. The ball was in the rough.

I ruled the player could drop away from the sidewalk under Rule 31-2. This decision has been questioned. Will you please give me your decision?

Question by: E. E. FORRESTER
HOBBS COUNTRY CLUB
HOBBS, N. M.

A: The metal pipe railing is an obstruction (Definition 20), and a player is entitled to relief from it within the limits set forth in Rule 31-2.

The sidewalk is an artificially constructed path and therefore not an obstruction (Definition 20), and the Rules of Golf provide no relief from it.

In the case you describe, it would appear that the player was entitled to relief from the railing under Rule 31-2. That relief could not be denied to him even though his ball had come to rest against the sidewalk.

If the sidewalk is raised above ground level in such a way as to create the likelihood of unfair lies, it would be within the province of the local committee to adopt a local rule providing relief from the edge of the sidewalk within the limits set forth in Rule 31-2 when the ball lay on grass. A ball lying on the sidewalk should of course be played as it lies.

Pressing Down Irregularities Permitted When Teeing Ball

USGA 53-18
R. 17-1, 3

Q1: In regard to playing the course as we find it, there is some controversy at my club as to whether or not a player is allowed to press down the ground with his foot around the ball on the teeing ground. An article in the USGA JOURNAL states that "it makes no difference at all whether the ball is in play or out of play" in the interpretation of Rule 17-3. My opponents in this argument state that this is permitted under Rule 17-1: "Except in teeing the ball . . .". Your clarification would be appreciated.

A1: Under the specific exception in Rule 17-1, the player when teeing a ball may remove or press down irregularities of surface which could affect his lie.

Taking Stance Fairly

Q2: Is the following a violation of the Rules? A right-handed player finds his ball under a low-hanging limb which does not in any way interfere with his normal stance, yet the ball is almost obstructed from his view when taking this stance and it would be difficult to get the club under the low limb for a swing at the ball. Is the player permitted to crawl under this limb, in the course of taking a left-handed stance, and to raise it up on his shoulders, and to make an unobstructed left-handed stroke at the ball?

A2: No; see Rule 17-3. This would not be "fairly taking his stance". The Rules of Golf Committee has previously stated:

"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. 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."

Questions by: LEWIE R. CRISMAN
SELMA COUNTRY CLUB
SELMA, ALA.

Knocking Opponent's Ball in Hole in Conceding Putt

USGA 53-21
R. 26-2b, 27-2a, 35-2d

Q: A is three feet from the cup in 3. B putts to within six inches of the cup in 3. A concedes B's putt, and in attempting to knock it back to B, he knocks it in the cup. B claims the hole, on the premise that he had hit his ball only three times. What is your decision?

Question by: BOB KEPLER
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLUMBUS, OHIO

A: In match play, since the elimination of the so-called stymie rule, there is nothing in the Rules of Golf which would prevent a player from verbally conceding an opponent's stroke at any time. Rule 35-2d well establishes the principle that a player by knocking his opponent's ball away after it has come to rest thereby concedes that the opponent has holed out with the next stroke. It should not therefore be considered a violation of the Rules for a player to concede an opponent's stroke by the act of knocking his ball away, and the opponent should not be considered to have holed on his last stroke if the ball should fall into the hole in this process.

However, a player knocking away an opponent's ball would be subject to a penalty

of loss of the hole under Rule 26-2b if it were not certain that the opponent's ball had come to rest. In any case the player could not subsequently require the opponent to replace his ball without being subject to a one-stroke penalty under Rule 27-2a.

Provisional Ball Covers All Contingencies

R & A 53-17
R. 30-1a, 3; 33

Q: A player from the tee drives a ball which may be out of bounds, lost, unplayable or in a water hazard or lateral water hazard.

In order to save time, he declares on the tee that he plays a provisional ball only to cover the cases "lost", "out of bounds", or "unplayable"; this provisional ball comes to rest near the hole for a certain 4.

Searching the original ball, it is found in a water hazard or lateral.

Does the player have the faculty of declaring his original ball unplayable and holing out with the provisional?

Note that the provisional ball was not played for the case of the ball being in a "water hazard" or "lateral".

We suppose the correct answer is the following:

The player cannot declare his first ball "unplayable", as the water hazard is a special case provided for in the Rules; so his provisional ball is of no use, as the original ball was not found in any of the situations for which the provisional ball was played.

Thus, the player may take either of the decisions referred in Rule 33-2.

Rule 30-3 is not to apply, as the provisional ball was not played to cover the particular case of the original ball being in a water hazard.

Question by: CLUBE DE GOLF DO ESTORIL
ESTORIL, PORTUGAL

A: The provisional ball was, in fact, played against the contingency of it landing in a water hazard. The player is not obliged to state the reason for which he plays a provisional ball (Rule 30-1a).

Under the circumstances, the player may either play the original ball as it lies or continue the provisional ball in play. He may not drop a ball to obtain relief as in Rule 33 (Rule 30-3).