

Changes in Rules of Golf

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It has been two years since the present world-wide code of Rules of Golf became effective. The Rules have had a thorough testing and have been the subject of close study by authorities on both sides of the Atlantic. There has been continuous correspondence between the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, and the United States Golf Association.

No colossal flaws have come to light, and so the two authorities have reached a two-fold agreement, as follows:

FIRST, to make a few minor amendments, mostly shadings in language, effective January 1, 1954.

SECOND, to make no further changes until there is opportunity for personal conference between representatives of the R. and A. and the USGA. This will probably occur during the spring of 1955 when an American Walker Cup Team next visits Great Britain.

Meanwhile, it appears that the Rules are somewhat better understood by the golfing public than were former codes. Before 1952 the USGA used to receive a great many questions and issue a great many formal Rules decisions. In 1952, the first year of the new code, there were 102 formal decisions, and this year the number probably will be fewer than 75.

One objective of Rules-making always must be to simplify the code to the point where the player can find the answer for himself just by reading the book, without requiring an official interpretation.

Changes in Hazard Rules

Of the changes effective January 1, 1954, the most important are concerned with hazards.

Henceforth, a ball may not be lifted for identification in a hazard, under an amendment to Rule 23-2. (However, if the ball be covered by sand, fallen leaves or the like, the player still may "remove as much thereof as will enable him to see the top of the ball", under Rule 33-1e. Further, if he plays a wrong ball from

a hazard, there still is no penalty—Rule 21-2,3.)

A new clause 3 of Rule 22 will provide that "A ball lifted in a hazard must be dropped and come to rest in that hazard unless otherwise provided for in the Rules." This merely puts in the Rules the substance of a principle of long standing.

The definition of a lateral water hazard has been clarified. Definition 14c will provide: "A 'lateral water hazard' is a water hazard or that part of a water hazard so situated that it is not feasible to drop a ball behind the water hazard and keep the spot at which the ball last crossed the hazard margin between the player and the hole. It is the duty of the Committee to define a lateral water hazard."

Rule 38-2 dealing with checking scores in stroke play has been changed in two particulars. It will now be obligatory upon the competitor to "ensure that the marker has signed the card." Secondly, in handicap play the Committee will now have responsibility for "application of the correct handicap."

Among the other amendments for 1954 are:

Definition 18—A marker "should not lift the ball or mark its position."

Rule 21-2, 3—Clarified to provide that strokes played with a wrong ball do not count in the player's score.

Rule 36-1—Combining match play and stroke play prohibited.

Rule 37-3—Clarified to prohibit practice on course before starting in stroke play.

All told, seven Definitions and 13 Rules have been somewhat altered for 1954. Those affected besides those named above are Definitions 17, 20, 21, 22 and 26; Rules 9, 27, 30, 32, 35, 40 and 41.

Lest there be concern that the nature of the game may be affected, we would repeat that the amendments are mostly minor changes in wording, not in the substance of the Rules. Golf in 1954 will still be golf.