



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. "54-1" means the first decision issued in 1954. "R.37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1954 Rules of Golf.

Water-Hazard Rule Requires Three-Stroke Penalty

USGA 53-37
R. 1, 33-2

Q: During one of our stroke play events, one contestant drove on a short water hole and her ball landed in the confines of the hazard, but not in the water, thus enabling her to play the ball from the hazard. In doing so, her ball hit a rock in the hazard and bounced back into the water. She dropped a ball in front of the hazard and to the right with a clear shot to the green.

I ruled the player had not played the ball from the teeing ground into the hole by successive strokes as required by Rule 1 as she had not dropped her ball in accordance with Rule 33-2a or b.

Question by: MRS. K. S. OGILVIE
EVANSTON, ILL.

A: The ruling was incorrect. The player should have been penalized three strokes.

Under the principle of Rule 33-2a, the player was entitled to drop a ball behind the water hazard so as to keep the point at which the ball lay in the hazard, after her unsuccessful stroke, between herself and the hole, under penalty of one stroke.

However, the player did not drop the ball in conformity with the pertinent Rule. The penalty for violation of Rule 33-2 in stroke play is two strokes.

It is noted from your sketch that the player did not drop the ball nearer the hole.

Ball Played Outside Teeing Ground Comes to Rest Out of Bounds

USGA 53-38
R. 1, 7-2, 13-2

Q: In stroke play A played his first stroke from outside the teeing ground and the ball clearly landed out of bounds. He played his second stroke from within the teeing ground. His fellow-competitor, B, said that a penalty stroke should be added to A's score in accordance with Rule 29-1a. A insisted that no penalty stroke should be added, because he played his first stroke from outside the teeing ground and therefore the ball was not in play from the beginning of the stroke. Is A right?

Question by: KOMYO OHTANI
KYOTO, JAPAN

A: A is correct. There is no penalty other than that stipulated in Rule 13-2. The stroke played outside the teeing ground was not a stroke in the stipulated round (Rule 7-2) and did not bring the ball into play. Therefore, the fact that it came to rest out of bounds was irrelevant.

Insect May Be Frightened Away from Ball

USGA 53-39
D. 17; R. 23-3

Q: When a fly landed on a player's ball, could he have taken a lighted cigarette and held it above the fly, the heat of the cigarette most naturally making the fly move

without touching the ball?

Question by: IRA L. ADLER
LANSFORD, PA.

A: Yes, provided the cigarette did not touch the ball or the fly.

An insect is not a loose impediment when it adheres to a ball (Definition 17) and may not be removed by cleaning the ball (Rule 23-3). However, there is nothing in the Rules to prevent a player from frightening an insect or other animate being.

Ball Enmeshed in Wire Screen

USGA 53-42
R. 31-2

This refers to USGA Decision 53-23, in which it was stated that the player may not measure through an immovable obstruction in determining where to drop a ball under Rule 31-2.)

Q: Suppose a ball in play became enmeshed in a wire screen which is an obstruction. On which side should it be dropped?

Question by: SAMUEL Y. BOCCS
JENKINTOWN, PA.

A: Either side.

Small British Ball Used on One Hole

USGA 53-43
R. 2-3; 11-1,3; 36-5; 40-3g

Q: A and B were playing against C and D in a four-ball tournament. At the seventeenth hole C noted that A had used the small British ball on that particular hole. A agreed he had used the ball, not knowing it at the time. B won the hole with a par 5, making A and B 1 up. The match was finished with a half on the eighteenth and C asked for a ruling.

After deliberation the Rules Committee decided that Rule 41-7 applied and disqualified team A and B, giving the match to team C and D. Appreciate your interpretation at your earliest convenience.

Question by: WILLIAM C. NEWMAN
SIASCONSET, MASS.

A: We do not concur in your decision, although it was final (see Rule 11-3).

Your statement of the facts indicates that C did not make a claim before the players played from the eighteenth teeing ground, as required by Rule 11-1. If this was the case, the hole should have stood as played.

Further, Rule 41-7 applies only to four-ball stroke play, and the situation you cite arose in four-ball match play.

If the claim had been made at the proper time, the Committee should have ruled that A had violated Rule 2-3. The penalty for a breach of this Rule is disqualification from the competition. In four-ball match play, this penalty does not apply to the partner, B (see Rule 40-3g and the principle regarding breaches of Rule 2 set forth in Rule 41-7a).

A committee is empowered by Rule 36-5 to waive or modify a penalty of disqualification, however, if it considers such action warranted in exceptional individual cases. For example, if the committee concluded that the illegal ball had been used inadvertently on only one hole, it might have disqualified the player only for that hole.

Stroke Could Be Replayed When Fellow-Competitor Interferes

USGA 53-44
R. 11-4; 26-3a,b; 41-8

Q: In four-ball stroke play, A, outside twenty yards, plays without requesting anyone to hold the pin.

1. B, his fellow-competitor; sees that ball is close, rushes to pull the pin and is struck. Rule 34-3b implies no penalty for A, since flagstick was not attended at A's request; but is B penalized? What is to prevent B from doing this maliciously?

2. In a similar situation, C, A's partner, does this. What is the decision?

Question by: MITCHELL ROSENHOLTZ
ST. PAUL, MINN.

A: 1. Rule 11-4 would over-ride Rule 26-3b in this situation, and A could have been permitted to replay his stroke without penalty to either side. Permission to replay the stroke could only have been granted at the time the incident occurred, however.

Since A was more than twenty yards from the hole and did not either request or tacitly consent to having the flagstick attended, Rule 34-3b does not apply.

2. A would incur a penalty of two strokes under Rule 26-3a. The penalty would not apply to C; see Rule 41-8.

Fourteen-Club Rule

USGA 53-45
R. 3, 36-5, 38-1

Q: During the qualifying round of medal play, one of the players discovered, after several holes, that she had fifteen clubs in her bag, and so advised the woman qualifying with her, a member of another team, who immediately reported the breach of rule

to the Rules Committee. The player having the fifteen clubs in her bag recognized the extra club as one belonging to a member of her team, who was at the time also playing her qualifying round. The club was sent to her out on the course by a caddie. The owner of the extra club had only thirteen clubs in her bag at the beginning of her qualifying round. The player who had breached the fourteen club rule continued to play, and at the end of the round the player qualifying with her, who was keeping her score, turned in an attested score for her after having previously reported the breach of the rule.

The Rules Committee official, having received the notice of the breach of the Rule before the attested score was turned in, disqualified the golfer breaching the Rule.

Then one of the players advised the Rules Committee later in the evening after the qualifying had been completed, that she had called an official of the USGA on the telephone and had been advised by him that the fourteen club rule did not necessarily apply in team matches to the extent of disqualification, that the penalty for breach of the rule in this instance could have been one, two or three strokes. It is certainly evident to me that there was a misunderstanding.

In my opinion, had the attested score been turned in before the breach of the rule had been reported, the player would not have been disqualified. Is this correct?

Although the tournament is over and the winning team has been declared Women's State Team Champion for 1953, the President of the Women's Division of the Virginia State Golf Association has requested me to present the matter to the USGA Rules of Golf Committee for an official opinion.

Question by: H. M. BLANKINSHIP
LYNCHBURG, VA.

A: Your committee's decision is final (see Rule 11-3), but we are pleased to offer our comments.

The competitor who started the competition with fifteen clubs violated Rule 3. The penalty is disqualification unless the committee sees fit to waive or to modify the penalty, as it is permitted to do under Rule 36-5 in exceptional individual cases when it considers such action warranted.

The competitor who accepted an additional club during her round from a fellow-competitor playing on the course also violated Rule 3, even though she had started with only thirteen clubs. The penalty, again,

is disqualification unless the committee sees fit to waive or to modify it.

The facts presented seem to indicate that the club concerned was inadvertently transferred from one player's bag to another before play began. If that is so, and if the player who temporarily carried the club did not use it, we feel that the Committee should have waived the penalty of disqualification in each case.

The marker who reported the violation of Rule 3 but turned in an attested score for the violator incurred no penalty. She was required by Rule 38-1 to do just that and to leave the imposition of the penalty to the committee, since the committee might choose to waive or to modify it.

In stroke play, the committee may impose a penalty whenever the facts requiring one become known and even after an attested score has been returned.

The official with whom you discussed the case by telephone undoubtedly was attempting to inform you that the disqualification penalty could be waived or modified, as explained above, if the committee so desired.

Ball Missed, Then Accidentally Knocked Off Tee

USGA 53-46

D. 5; R. 14, 27-1c

Q: A tees up his ball within the teeing ground, addresses it and swings with the intention of hitting it. He misses the ball completely. Then, in the act of wagging, he knocks it off the tee.

B says he is shooting 3 and must play the ball where it lies, even though it still lies within the teeing ground. A claims there is no Rule that covers this incident, that he can re-tee without penalty.

Question by: MRS. ARNOLD SIMENSEN
WINCHENDON, MASS.

A: A's ball lies 2, and he must play the ball as it lies.

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."

Therefore, the ball went into play as soon as A made his first stroke and it was in play when accidentally moved. Rule 27-1c provides that the player incurs a penalty stroke in such a circumstance and must play the ball as it lies.

Rule 14 governs only when the ball is not in play.

Movable Obstruction DefinedUSGA 53-55
R. 31

Q. A ball was hit from the seventeenth tee and hooked, landing in fairly heavy grass about midway between a tree and a ball washer at the eighteenth tee, the distance between the tree and the washer being about two feet. This washer is on a post like a fence post driven about two feet or more in the ground and with a piece of iron V shaped on the bottom to keep it solid. These washers are placed at every tee as a permanent fixture and have never been removed even during the winter. The player who made the shot insisted he had the right to move this washer and with the aid of caddies was able to pull it out of the ground, claiming that under the Rules it was a movable obstruction on the course. He was then able to make a clear shot to the green and tie the match, suffering no penalty for his bad tee shot. The matter was referred to the Golf Committee but they couldn't agree as to whether the washer was or was not a movable object but did agree that it had been put there as a permanent fixture.

Question by: FRANK H. REYNOLDS
NEW YORK, N. Y.

A. The ball washer which you describe appears to be an immovable obstruction within the meaning of Rule 31. The player may have been entitled to relief under Rule 31-2, governing immovable obstructions, but he was not entitled to relief under Rule 31-1, governing movable obstructions.

A movable obstruction is one which may be moved only with reasonable effort, without unduly delaying play in violation of Rule 37-7 and without permanently impairing proper course maintenance.

The penalty for a violation of Rule 31-1 is loss of hole in match play and two strokes in stroke play; in four-ball play the penalty would not extend to the player's partner (see Rules 40-3g and 41-8).

Handicaps in Extended CompetitionUSGA 53-58
R. 36-1

Q. In a ladies' handicap tournament in which 32 have qualified on the basis of their current handicaps at the beginning of the qualifying round and whose pairings for match play over a period of four or five weeks have been drawn in accordance with their stroke play round, should the entire tournament be played with each competitor

using the same handicap that had been used in qualifying or, as this competition is over a four or five weeks period, should the surviving player use her then current handicap (assuming her handicap may have changed since playing the qualifying round) in effect at the time of each round of match play during the tournament?

Question by: MRS. ANITA MORRIS
ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N. Y.

A. The matter is one for the committee in charge to determine and publish prior to the competition. Rule 36-1 provides in part: "The Committee shall lay down the conditions under which a competition is to be played."

The USGA recommends that player's handicaps should not be changed during the progress of a competition that is to be completed within a week. For competitions extending over a longer period, each competitor should use his handicap in effect at the time each round or match is played. This applies to both Current Handicaps and Basic Handicaps.

This supersedes USGA Decision 52-72 and all previous on this subject.

When Ball Is LostR & A 53-59
Def. 6.

Q. A player played his tee shot and, on going forward, failed to find his ball, so, saying he would give that up and go back and play another, he proceeded to do so. The first ball was found by his opponent as soon as he had struck his second.

The dispute which later took place in the clubhouse was: (a) Whether the ball should be considered lost as soon as the player gives up the search and declares his intention of going back and playing another, although less than five minutes has elapsed since the search began, (b) Whether the ball can be considered still in play if found within five minutes but after the player has gone back and struck his second ball.

It is admitted that it is unlikely that the second alternative would occur within the five minute limit but the question there is purely theoretical.

A. Under Definition 6 a ball is lost if it be not found within five minutes. Provided the ball is found within that period and the player has not played another ball, other than the provisional ball, from the spot from which he played his previous shot, he can continue play with his original ball.