



# 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.

## Movable Obstruction Defined

USGA 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 described 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 with-

out 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).



## Claim Need Not Halt Play

USGA 53-56  
R. 11-1

**Q:** A and B are playing a match for which no referee was appointed. On one of the holes a dispute arises. A makes a claim before the players play from the next teeing ground, as required by Rule 11-1.

X states that this procedure is in accordance with the Rules and that the matter may thereafter be referred to the tournament committee at an appropriate time. Y states that the dispute must be resolved on the spot, before the players play from the next teeing ground or, in the case of the 18th green, before they leave that green. Which is correct?

Question by: WILBUR F. WARNER  
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

**A:** X is correct.



## Lifting Another's Ball

USGA 53-57  
R. 23-1

**Q:** When on the putting green may a fellow-

competitor in stroke play or an opponent in match play mark your ball after asking permission to do so?

**A1:** Never; Rule 23-1 provides:

"A ball to be lifted under the Rules or Local Rules shall be lifted by the player or his partner or either of their caddies."

**Q2:** If not permissible, which one incurs the penalty, if any, the owner of the ball or the person who marks the ball?

**A2:** The penalty is levied against the player responsible for the breach.

*In match play:* If the owner consents to have his ball lifted by his opponent or his opponent's caddie, the owner loses the hole. If the opponent or the opponent's caddie lift the ball without permission of the owner, the opponent loses the hole (Rule 27-2a is superseded by Rule 23-1 in this case).

*In stroke play:* If the owner consents to have his ball lifted by a fellow-competitor or a fellow-competitor's caddie, the owner is penalized two strokes. If a fellow-competitor or a fellow-competitor's caddies lift another's ball without permission, there can be no penalty since they are outside agencies (Definition 22) and as such cannot be penalized.

**Q3:** Knowing that all rules have good intent, what is the purpose of this ruling?

**A3:** The owner of a ball is generally responsible for it. The objects of Rule 23-1 are to preserve that responsibility, to prevent an opponent from taking advantage of the owner by improperly lifting and marking his ball, and thus to promote fair and orderly play.

Questions by: MRS. B. E. WOHLERS  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



### **Borrowing Club in Four-Ball**

USGA 53-59  
R. 3, 11-1, 40-3g, 41-7a

**Q:** A and B are playing C and D in a four-ball match. Neither C nor D possessed fourteen clubs. A and B noted that on the third green C borrowed D's putter to putt with. This appeared to be accidental and nothing was said. However, this occurred again on the fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth holes. Prior to teeing off on the tenth tee, A and B called it to the attention of C and D and requested the Rules Committee to make a decision on this violation of the Rules.

The decision reached was that C is disqualified from further play. Also, since the violation was brought to the attention of C and D and the Rules Committee at the end of the ninth hole, that C and D should lose the ninth hole. Therefore, instead of C and D being 3 up at the end of nine holes, they are now 2 up. D then went on to play A and B starting at the tenth hole.

Were the two decisions reached by the Rules Committee correct, and under what specific Rules of Golf do these violations apply?

Question by: ROBERT L. MORRIS  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

**A:** The Committee was right in ruling that C had disqualified himself from further play. Rule 3 was violated when C borrowed a club "from any other person playing on the course," and the penalty is disqualification. We would see no reason for the Committee to waive or to modify the penalty by invoking Rule 36-5 in these circumstances.

The claim made by A and B pertained to the play of the ninth hole. C's score for the ninth hole could not be used by his side; however, D's score could be used (see Rules 11-1 and 40-3g). C's scores for holes prior to the ninth were not affected because A and B did not enter a claim for any other hole within the time limit specified in Rule 11-1.

With C disqualified after the ninth hole, it was proper for D to continue to play the match alone against A and B.

The foregoing is based on the understanding that C's action in borrowing D's putter and D's action in lending the putter were taken in ignorance of Rule 3, that there was no agreement between C and D to waive Rule 3, and that there was no agreement between A-B and C-D to waive Rule 3. If it were otherwise, all parties to any such agreement would be disqualified, under Rule 4.

Had the competition been four-ball stroke play, C would have been disqualified as of the hole where he first violated Rule 3, and D would have been obliged to represent the side alone from that point. See Rule 41-7a.



### **Provisional Ball Strikes Original Ball**

USGA 53-60  
R. 11-4, 27-1a, 30-1d

**Q:** Provisional ball, which is not an outside agency, is played and strikes own original ball:

- (a) In match play, does Rule 26-2a apply and player's side lose the hole?
- (b) In stroke play, does that competitor whose provisional ball strikes his own original ball incur two strokes penalty under Rule 26-3a?

Questions by: S. TAKAHATA, President  
HIRONO GOLF CLUB,  
KOBE, JAPAN

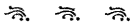
**A:** In equity, the original ball must be lifted and dropped, or on the putting green placed, as near as possible to the spot from which it was moved, without penalty. The principle of Rule 27-1a governs.

Although Rule 30-1d provides that "A provisional ball is never an outside agency," it was not meant to force the imposition of artificial and unfair penalties in freak cases such as those above. The principle of equity should underlie all decisions—see Rule 11-4.

A provisional ball has a special status. A provisional ball is customarily played only when the original ball may be in difficulty, the degree of which difficulty cannot usually be assessed at the time the provisional ball is played. It is not permissible to lift the original ball while the provisional ball is being played, nor would it be feasible to do so. Thus, whenever a provisional ball is played, the player runs some risk of having that ball strike the original ball. To force him into a penalty in such circumstances would be unfair.

The term "other equipment" in Rule 26-2a and 26-3a was not meant to cover a ball. This is indicated in Rule 26-3b, where the term "ball or other equipment" is used. Compare also Rule 27-2a with 27-2b.

*This supersedes USGA 52-70 and 52-82 (Q and A 2).*



#### Rule 40-1b Has Precedence Over Rule 40-1d

USGA 53-63  
R. 40-1b, d

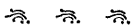
Q: I would like a ruling as to which section of Rule 40-1 has precedence, b or d.

An example: three people are on the green and the person whose ball is farthest from the hole putts, leaving himself a four foot putt. He then wants to complete his putting even though the other two balls are now farther from the hole. He says he can putt, citing Rule 40-1b. The opponents say "no," citing Rule 40-1d.

Question by: JOHN H. FRENCH, JR.  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

A: Rule 40-1b, when properly invoked, takes precedence over Rule 40-1d.

In the case you cite, the player whose ball was nearest the hole would have to show that it might be of assistance to another player or side in order to exercise the privilege of playing out of turn without breaching Rule 40-1d.



#### Provisional Ball on Every Hole

USGA 53-65

R. 8, 29-2 (note), 30-1, 2, 3, 4, 37-7

Q1: The Rules are specific in stating, "The player is not obliged to state the reason for which he plays a provisional ball" and also, "The player is

the sole judge as to when his ball is unplayable, etc." This is a note under Rule 29-2.

(a) What is there to prevent a player from playing a provisional ball on every par 3 hole?

(b) If he is in a trap and happens to hole out his provisional ball for a 3, I see nothing in the rule that prevents him from declaring the first ball unplayable. Or if he is close up to the hole on his provisional ball for a sure 4, and if his first ball is by a tree where he must play the ball sideways before hitting it on the green, he may again find it best to declare his first ball unplayable. I don't think this is fair but I don't see why he could not legally do so.

A1: (a) The Rules of Golf are framed on the assumption that golfers play honestly. Permission to play a provisional ball is granted by Rule 30-1 only on the following conditions: first, when a ball may be lost, out of bounds, unplayable, or in a water hazard or lateral water hazard, and, secondly, for the sole purpose of saving time.

If there is no reasonable possibility that the ball may be in any one of the above conditions, the player has no right to play a provisional ball, and if he does so he violates Rule 30-1, penalty for which is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. See also Rule 8, which prohibits a practice stroke during the play of a hole, and Rule 37-7, dealing with delay in play.

(b) In the two situations described, if the player had the right to play a provisional ball, he was entitled to elect whether to play out the hole with the original ball or the provisional ball, as provided for in Rule 30-2.



#### Provisional Ball Covers All Contingencies

Q2: Can a player hit a provisional off a tee and declare that he is playing it *only* to cover a lost, out of bounds, or unplayable ball but wants to reserve the right to drop the ball as under Rule 33? The only reason he is hitting a provisional is to save time, and the water hazard or ditch is not visible from the tee. He does not want to have to walk up there and back to the tee again but does not want to give up the right to drop out of the water hazard and play 3. On the provisional ball he would have played 3 off the tee, so would be playing 4 in about a comparable position.

A2: No. When a player plays a provisional ball under 30-1, it must be provisional for all of the possibilities stated in the Rule. The Rule does not provide for a player to select certain possibilities and exclude others. Attention is called to sections 3 and 4 of Rule 30.

Questions by: BENJAMIN F. JAKES  
BOSTON, MASS.

## "Normal Course of Play" Defined

USGA 54-1  
R. 3, 11-3

**Q:** At the Los Angeles Open two questions arose, and although they were answered by members of the tournament committee, I have been asked to secure your interpretation and advice for future eventualities.

During the first eighteen holes one professional broke the shaft of his putter while going uphill from one green to the next tee, using the putter carelessly and informally as a cane. The contestant, seeing a spectator carrying a similar putter, asked if he could use it. They traded putters and the player carried on.

As he passed the ninth hole he contacted a member of the tournament Rules committee, who on hearing of the accidental breaking approved of the player's borrowing the other putter and authorized the player to continue play.

Two hours late the player posted his eighteen-hole score. Shortly thereafter a ruling was made by a PGA traveling official to the effect that the player had disqualified himself by using fifteen clubs in the round; he claimed the replacement was illegal due to the fact that the original putter had not been broken in the course of play.

Was the player in violation of the Rules of Golf in replacing a broken club under the conditions listed above?

Was the PGA representative in error in overruling the decision made by a badged official member of the tournament Rules Committee?

Question by: HARRY WINTERS,  
INGLEWOOD, CAL.

**A:** Assuming that the competitor started with fourteen clubs, he breached Rule 3 in replacing his putter if it had not become unfit for play in the normal course of play.

The question of what constitutes "normal course of play" is a matter for the committee in charge of the competition to determine. There are other uses to which a club may be normally put during the course of a round aside from striking the golf ball. If the circumstances attending the breaking of the club clearly indicate that the act was accidental and inadvertent, the committee would be justified in permitting the club to be replaced. However, if there be any suggestion that the act was willful or intentional, it could not be construed that the breaking occurred during the normal course of play without opening the door to evasion of the Rule. In other words, it is not "normal" for a player to break a club in a fit of temper, in order to dispose of it or by subjecting it to a strain which obviously may result in breaking it.

Rule 11-3 provides that a Committee's decision is final in such matters. We are not familiar with the administrative organization responsible for the conduct of this tournament and therefore cannot say whether the individual who made the decision

at the ninth hole or the PGA representative properly represented the "Committee."



## Ball Unfit for Play

USGA 54-2  
R. 28

**Q:** How does one determine that a ball be so damaged as to be unfit for play?

Question by: RUSSELL N. SHERBA  
CANONSBURG, PA.

**A:** A ball may be properly held unfit for play under Rule 28 if, for example, it becomes cut, loses its shape, or generally becomes cracked, split, pierced, or marred to such a degree as to interfere with its true flight or true roll or its normal behavior when struck.

Rule 28 requires that, in the absence of a referee, the player shall inform his opponent or fellow-competitor of his intention to replace it. If the opponent or fellow-competitor disagree as to the condition of the ball, the procedure is as stipulated in Rule II.

A violation of the Rule—i.e., changing a ball fit for play for another ball—entails a penalty of loss of the hole in match play and of two strokes in stroke competition. No player may be the sole ultimate arbiter of whether or not he has incurred a penalty.



## Provisional Ball Retired From Play Prematurely

USGA 54-3  
R. 30-2,4

**Q:** In a four-ball match the player's drive went in a direction where it might be lost or unplayable. He played a provisional ball. He then found what he assumed was his ball in a bunker and played it to the green. Another of the four players then picked up the provisional ball with, of course, the approval of the player. Arriving at the green, he found the ball he had played to the green was not his. He then found his own ball in the bunker but in an unplayable lie. What could he do?

Question by: NORMAN B. BEECHER,  
CLEARWATER, FLA.

**A:** Rules 30-2 and 30-4 govern. When the player picked up his provisional ball and retired it from play, he was electing to play his original ball under Rule 30-2. The fact that he made the election prematurely is irrelevant to the Rules and involved a risk which he could have avoided by not touching the provisional ball until he had identified his original beyond doubt. Once he retired the provisional ball from play and subsequently found the original unplayable, he was precluded by Rule 30-4 from obtaining relief under Rule 29-2. If the original was in fact unplayable, he could only give up the hole in match play or put the provisional ball back into play as provided in Rule 23-4 in stroke play.