



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.

Ball Not Identified Is Lost

R & A 54-4
D. 6

Q: In a match-play competition A and B were playing a long, one-shot hole, which was semi-blind, straight into a low, bright sun. Owing to the sun, neither tee shot was observed by the players, who were carrying their own clubs. On reaching the green one ball was seen to be on it. A went onto the green, looked at the ball but did not touch it and said to B, "This is yours." They then searched unsuccessfully for the other ball, and after five minutes A said, "Come on. We have had our five minutes. Let's get on." B then picked up the ball on the green, looked at it and said to A, "This is not mine, it is yours." He replaced the ball. A lifted the ball, confirmed that it was in fact his, and replaced it. They then searched for B's ball. A found a ball, and said to B, "Here you are." Without identifying the ball as his, B played it onto the green and they completed the hole, A taking one stroke fewer than B to do so. It was then found that the ball B had played was not the one he played off the tee.

Having conceded the hole under the mistaken impression that the ball on the green belonged to B, did A have any right to play the hole out when it was found after-

wards to be his or was the hole irrevocably lost by him when he so conceded it?

A: A cannot escape the consequences of his failure to identify his own ball. When A failed to find his ball after a five-minute search, it became a lost ball and no longer in play. As A elected not to adopt the procedure for a lost ball but to concede the hole, his decision was irrevocable. B's subsequent actions could not deprive him of a hole already won.

Provisional Balls Unlimited

R & A 54-5
R. 30-1

Q: A player in a stroke round plays a ball from a tee he has reason to think may be lost or unplayable. He plays a provisional ball. This also was probably unplayable. Before leaving the tee he plays a further ball and then goes forward, finds his first ball playable and proceeds to hole out with that ball, recording the actual strokes taken with that ball.

Was any penalty incurred? If not, why?

A: No penalty was incurred.

If a player considers that a ball played provisionally may be lost, out of bounds or unplayable, he is at liberty to play a second provisional ball and so on. The second provisional ball bears to the first pro-

visional ball the same relationship as regards procedure and penalties as the first provisional ball bears to the original ball.

In the 1949 Royal and Ancient Golf Club code the player was restricted to one provisional ball for a ball thought to be lost or out of bounds. This restriction was removed in the 1951 code when the penalty of stroke and distance was re-introduced.

Ball on Lip of Cup in Stroke Play

USGA 54-10
R. 25-1, 35-2d, 37-7

Q: Is there any rule in stroke play which allows a competitor to wait five minutes when his ball rests on the lip of the cup to see whether it will drop? I have looked through the Rules of Golf, 1953 edition, and can find no such ruling. The only reference I could find dealt with match play, Rule 35-2d. Cary Middlecoff is reputed to have waited two and one half minutes of a five minute stretch to see whether his ball would drop in a recent tournament on the circuit.

If there is such a rule, could you tell me where I could find a book covering Rules governing medal play which do not appear in the Rule book referred to above?

Question by: BEN FEINBERG
FAIRMONT, MINN.

A: There is no Rule permitting a delay of five minutes or any other specific period.

Rule 37-7 provides in part: "Players shall at all times play without undue delay." The penalty for violation in stroke play is two strokes; for repeated offense, disqualification. As Rule 25-1 prohibits play while a ball is moving (with certain exceptions), the player is entitled to the benefit of any doubt.

With specific reference to the putting green, the above is expressed in the following note to Rule 35-2d, which, while published in connection with a match play Rule, applies in principle to stroke play also:

"Whether a ball has come to rest is a question of fact. If there be reasonable

doubt, the owner of the ball is not allowed more than a momentary delay to settle the doubt."

The Rules of Golf cover both match play and stroke play.

Lateral Water Hazard Rule Explained

USGA 54-11
D. 14c, R. 33-3b

Q: I do not understand Rule 33-3b. The word "opposite" seems to be our nemesis, but the complete sentence is confusing to us also. Perhaps your decision on a specific hole would help clarify the Rule. There is a par 3 hole at Minnesota Valley Country Club which has a lateral water hazard. However, if a player drops his ball within two club-lengths of the margin, he is definitely placing it nearer the hole. I am enclosing a map of the hole. It is played from a low tee up a hill to the green. To the right of the green is a sand trap and then further to the right is a steep hill down to the lake, so that if a ball is sliced, it can easily come to rest in the lake. It is surely a lateral water hazard because no part of it is directly between the tee and the green. If you will place an X on the map to show me where the ball should be dropped, I shall appreciate it very much.

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

A: In proceeding under Rule 33-3b, first determine the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the lateral water hazard. A ball may then be dropped at either of the following places:

(a) Within two club-lengths of that point, on the same side of the hazard as that point; or

(b) On the other side of the hazard, opposite that point, and within two club-lengths of the hazard margin on the other side.

In either case the ball must come to rest not nearer the hole than that point where the original ball last crossed the hazard margin.

In the case you cite, the lake appears so large that it is not practical to drop a

ball on the "other side."

It is virtually always possible to drop a ball on the near side of a lateral water hazard and abide by the Rule. To do so it is sometimes necessary to drop the ball close to the hazard margin. A radius of two club-lengths from the last point of crossing almost always gives ample area in which to drop the ball without having it come to rest nearer the hole. Judging from the diagram submitted, this could be done in the present case.

For definition of a lateral water hazard, see Definition 14c.

Provisional Ball for Ball in Water Hazard

USGA 54-12

R. 30-1,2,3; 33-2

Q: In our club a great deal of argument is made over Rule 30-3 and Rule 33-2. There does seem to be a conflict in the penalty. Will you please give me a clarification?

Question by: GEORGE M. BALL
BUSHNELL, ILL.

A: If a provisional ball has been played under Rule 30-1 and if the original ball is abandoned in a water hazard or a lateral water hazard, Rules 30-2 and 30-3 require that the provisional ball then become the ball in play. The player thus has, in effect, exercised option b of Rule 33-2, and to his score for the hole there must be added the penalty stroke provided for in Rule 33-2. The purpose of Rule 30-3 is to prohibit the player from having the further option of proceeding under Rule 30-2a.

Ball Strikes Flagstick Attended by Partner's Caddie

USGA 54-14

R. 26-2, 34-2d, 40-3b

Q: Two players played their better ball against the better ball of two other players (a four-ball match). A player's ball struck the flagstick while his partner's caddie was attending the flag. At first it seemed this would come under Rule 34-2d: "If the player's ball strike the flagstick when it is

attended by or has been removed by himself, his partner, or either of their caddies, the player's side shall lose the hole." I quoted this rule but was reminded by one of the opponents that Rule 40-3b under Best-Ball and Four-Ball Match Play says: "If a player's ball be stopped or deflected by the player, his partner or either of their caddies, clubs or other equipment, the player is disqualified for the hole. His partner incurs no penalty." This became important because the "innocent" partner won the hole.

At first it would appear that the difference between Rules 34 and 40 lies in whether or not what is struck is the flagstick or caddies and equipment. However, section 3g of Rule 40 says "In all other cases where, by the Rules of Golf, a player would incur a penalty, the penalty shall not apply to his partner." Furthermore, even if the flagstick vs. caddies and equipment has nothing to do with it, Rule 26-2 seems to be in contradiction to Rule 40.

If you can straighten me out, I shall be grateful.

Question by: WILMER E. KENWORTHY
STATE COLLEGE, PA.

A: The case is governed by Rule 40-3b. The player was disqualified for the hole when his ball struck the flagstick attended by his partner's caddie. The partner incurred no penalty, as his ball was not affected.

Rule 40-1a provides: "The Rules of Golf, so far as they are not at variance with the following special Rules, shall apply to all three-ball, best-ball and four-ball matches."

Thus, Rule 34-2d is superseded by Rule 40-3b in the present case. "Side" as used in Rule 34-2d applies to several forms of play, such as singles, threesomes and foursomes, but not to four-ball play because a special Rule for four-ball play takes precedence.

Rule 34 deals specifically with the flagstick. Rule 26-2 deals with caddies, clubs and other equipment carried by the players and their caddies. The subject matter of both these Rules is comprehended by Rule 40-3b for four-ball play.