



# 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. "55-1" means the first decision issued in 1955. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1955 Rules of Golf.

### *No Practice Before Play-off*

USGA 55-13

D. 29; R. 36-2c, 36-4b, 37-3, 38-1, 38-2

**Q 1:** Rule 37-3 states "On any day for a stroke competition, a competitor before starting shall not practice on the course . . ."

In our city amateur tourney on our municipal links, we had eleven players tied for four places, meaning a play-off which was held the following day.

The question of a player practicing before the play-off on the course used in the play-off was brought up and I wish a ruling concerning it. Does that same Rule apply in the case of the play-off as on the days on which actual stroke play is being played?

**A 1:** Yes. Competitors in a stroke competition have completed any scheduled round when their cards have been attested and returned to the Committee as called for in Rules 38-1 and 38-2. (See also Definition 29). Any subsequent play-off, whether on a hole-by-hole basis or at 18 holes, is a separate phase of the competi-

tion made necessary by the fact that it has ended in a tie.

Rule 37-3 prohibits practice on the course by a competitor before he starts any round on the day for which the round is scheduled. Since a play-off is a separate phase of the competition open only to those who have qualified to compete in it by means of the tie, the prohibition under Rule 37-3 against practice would apply to the play-off whether held on the same day or not. The purpose of this Rule is to prohibit practice on the competition course before starting a round, unless the Committee permits otherwise.

Aside from the provisions of Rule 37-3, Rule 36-4b obliges the Committee to designate the area which may be used for practice on the course if there is no other practice ground; further, on any day of stroke play such practice area shall not include any putting green on the course.

### *Groupings in Play-offs*

**Q 2:** Is there any set method on how many players be sent from the first tee in the play-off? Say in the case of 11

players, should they be split, 5 in the first group and six in the last, or send them out in 4, 4, and 3? Please advise the procedure used at the national tourneys?

**A 2:** There is no fixed method, and it is up to the Committee—see Rule 36-2a. Rule 36-2c implies a limit of four to a group.

Questions by: TED DRAPER  
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

### ***Committee Should Correct Its Handicap Error***

USGA 55-15

R. 11-1, 11-3

**Q.:** Santa Anita presented a protest over the results of their match with Fox Hills. Elona Mathis, playing for Santa Anita, was informed by the Association Handicap Chairman that she had been cut to a 10. She played to this 10 handicap for the team match. However, upon recomputing, the Handicap Chairman discovered that through her error she had incorrectly computed Elona's handicap and she should have been playing to an 11 handicap. Had she played to her 11, she and her partner would have halved No. 15, instead of losing it, and their match would have been halved, giving both Santa Anita and Fox Hills a point and one-half.

It is the Board's understanding that Fox Hills' players, Greenburg and Hutchison, played this No. 15 hole thinking that Mathis received a stroke on the hole, and completed play of the match believing they had halved the entire match. Santa Anita called to their attention the fact that Mathis was a 10 and not entitled to a stroke on the 15th hole, so Fox had won two and one-half points and Santa Anita one-half.

It is the decision of the Board that as long as the error in handicap was made by the Handicap Chairman, the player should not be penalized. Therefore, we are correcting the total number of points to read:

Fox Hills	10 points
Santa Anita	2 points

Prior to this decision Fox Hill had been credited with 11 points and Santa Anita 1 point. We believe that you will agree that this is an equitable decision, as the girl acted in good faith and it was not her error.

Question by: MRS. PAUL R. JOHNSON  
Long Beach, Cal.

**A.:** As the Committee erred in computing the handicap, the Committee should correct its error if a remedy be feasible. The matter is up to the judgment of the Committee; its objective should be fair play, and, under Rule 11-3, the Committee has authority to make a final decision.

The case presents an unusual problem because match play was involved and as it is a basic principle of match play that both sides are entitled at all times to know exactly how the match stands. That is a reason for the time limit for claims set forth in Rule 11-1.

However, this does not relieve the Committee of the responsibility for correcting its own error in whatever manner it deems best.

### ***Relief From Lateral Hazard After Unsuccessful Stroke***

USGA 55-18

R. 13-2, 21-3, 33-3b

**Q. 1:** A contestant drove his tee shot into a lateral water hazard and elected to play out. Failing to get out and not crossing any margin of the hazard on this stroke, he then elected to take the relief afforded on the previous stroke and dropped within two club-lengths of the margin of the hazard where his tee shot had crossed. He dropped with the one-stroke penalty in 3 and was shotting 4. His score was 6 on the hole.

On completing the round, he reported to the Committee how he had played the hole. The Committee was of the opinion he had not played the hole in accordance with the rule, citing the USGA rulings 53-37 and 54-15, but there was no information available to the Committee as to how he should have played the hole.

He was several strokes above the qualifying score necessary to make the tournament, so rather than make a ruling the Committee accepted his score.

If there has been a ruling made on this, please quote, or if not, please advise how this should be played.

**A. 1:** The place where the ball lay in the lateral water hazard after the unsuccessful stroke became the point opposite which a ball should have been dropped under Rule 33-3b.

### ***Stroke Outside Teeing Ground***

**Q. 2:** Stroke play: Player plays stroke from without the teeing ground, into a water hazard, plays one stroke in hazard and clears the confines of the hazard, lying three strokes from tee. Then discovers he has played wrong ball in the hazard. Rule 13-2 states that he should play from within teeing ground, shooting 4 from tee. But in this case he was not allowed to lift his ball for identification, so would say that Rule 21-3 would take precedence and he would be shooting 2 from the teeing ground

**A. 2:** Under Rule 13-2, after playing his first stroke from outside the teeing ground, the competitor was obliged to count that stroke and any subsequent stroke so played, and then to play from within the teeing ground.

However, the competitor played another (wrong) ball in a water hazard. Under Rule 21-3, strokes played with a wrong ball are not counted in stroke play, and there is no penalty for so playing a wrong ball in a hazard.

Thus, the competitor was obliged to put a ball in play from the teeing ground, and it would be his second stroke.

**Q. 3:** Same conditions as above except that player plays a stroke without the confines of the hazard, then discovers he has played the wrong ball from the hazard.

**A. 3:** It is understood that the competitor played a ball from outside the

teeing ground, played a second stroke with this ball through the green, and then played a wrong ball in a water hazard.

His first two strokes count. He now plays three from the teeing ground. See Rules 13-2 and 21-3.

Questions by: ROY ALLEN

Oklahoma City, Okla.

### ***Smoothing Foot Prints With Ball Still In Bunker***

USGA 55-16

R. 33-1g

**Q.:** Player's ball is in sand bunker. He plays the ball and it does not get out of the bunker. Before he plays his second shot in the bunker, he smooths out his foot prints in the sand with his club. Is it deemed by the Rules of Golf that the player has grounded his club?

Question by: C. H. STEWART

Gulfport, Miss.

**A.:** If the player's action improved the lie of his ball or assisted him in his subsequent play of the hole, he would lose the hole in match play or incur a penalty of two strokes in stroke play under Rule 33-1g. If not, the player would incur no penalty.

It is a question of fact whether or not an action assists a player in his subsequent play of the hole.

### ***Practice Stroke With Plastic Ball Is Violation***

USGA 55-17

R. 8, 37-7

**Q.:** A player insists, prior to making his regular shot, in putting down a plastic ball and hitting it in the direction of the hole. It doesn't matter whether he is on the tee, fairway or rough. Besides slowing down the game, it becomes a little aggravating. The rest of the foursome has tried to tell him that there must be a rule prohibiting this practice and all he replies is, "Show it to me."

Question by: ROBERT W. FERGUSON

Wheeling, W.V.

**A.:** The player's practice delays play and violates Rule 37-7.

In playing a practice stroke during the play of a hole, the player also violates Rules 8.

### **Striking Branch To Move Ball Is Breach**

USGA 55-19  
D. 30; R. 16, 19-1

**Q.:** On our golf course (Cypress Point) there are numerous cypress trees in the fairways themselves and on the borders. A high ball will generally lodge on top, but occasionally if found in some low branches it can be driven out with a hard horizontal stroke, which I presume is entirely legitimate.

A ball was found lying loosely in a nest of twigs, ten or twelve feet above the ground, but the branch to which these twigs were attached was well in reach. The player delivered a mighty blow with his niblick at the branch and the ball dropped to the ground. He then played out the hole and referred us to Definition 30: "A 'stroke' is the forward movement of the club made with the intention of moving the ball."



But the opponent claimed the hole under Rule 19-1: "The ball shall be fairly struck at with the head of the club, etc."

Question by: GEORGE NICKEL  
Pebble Beach, Cal.

**A.:** It is understood that the player did not strike at the ball but struck at the branch in order to move the ball.

The player lost the hole. He did not strike at the ball fairly, as is required by Rule 19-1; the definition of a stroke (Definition 30) has to be taken in conjunction with this Rule, and the player did not make a stroke.

Further, he did not play the ball as it lay, in violation of Rule 16, which is fundamental to the entire code of Rules.

Although the ball was not actually touched, the object on which it lay was touched purposely to move the ball.

### **Holes Made by Animals**

R & A 54-60  
R. 32

**Q.:** This course is unfortunate in that it suffers from the activities of rabbits and, since the deletion of "scrapes" from the Rules, difficulties have arisen.

In several of our fairways there are numerous, shall we say, "lapine excavations" which vary in dimensions from between 2 and 6 inches in diameter and to 6 inches and more in depth.

A ball going into one of these excavations would in 95% of cases be definitely unplayable as it would actually be below ground level. Could we please be advised:

- Whether these excavations are to be regarded as "scrapes" and therefore as "rubs of the green" necessitating a declaration that the ball is unplayable with the attendant penalty or
- if not, what is regarded as a fair definition of a hole with particular reference to the application of Rule 32-1?

**A.:** Rule 32 amended on January 1st, 1954, makes no mention of "rabbit scrapes"; a player is therefore entitled to the relief afforded by this rule if his ball lies in a hole made by a burrowing animal. The depth of the hole is not defined and is immaterial.