



# THE REFEREE

## Decisions by the Rules of Golf Committees

### *Guy Wires on Boundary Fence*

USGA 55-26  
D. 20; R. 31-2

**Q.** A fence marks the south boundary of the course. To protect apartment buildings, a net extends upwards from the fence and is fastened by guy wires which are anchored to the ground two to three feet inside of boundary fence.

**1.** May these guy wires be classed as immovable obstructions?

**2.** A ball close to the boundary fence is dropped away from the guy wire and comes to rest within two club-lengths of the point of the obstruction nearest which the ball originally lay. It is not closer to the hole, but it is farther from the boundary fence than it was originally and in a better position. What is the ruling?

Question by: MRS. L. K. O'TOOLE  
Chicago, Ill.

**A. 1:** Yes. While a fence marking the boundary of a course is not an obstruction, by Definition 20, guy wires extending into the course to support such a fence or a screen or net above a fence would be immovable obstructions. The guy wires do not define the boundary.

**2.** The ball appears to have been dropped as required by Rule 31-2. A player is entitled to relief from an immovable

obstruction, within the limits of that Rule, without regard to how the position of the ball or the line of flight may be affected by other factors.

### *"Obstructions" Outside Limits of Course*

USGA 55 27  
D. 20; R. 18-1

**Q.** USGA Decision 51-62 held that a player was not entitled to relief from a building located out of bounds which interfered with his backswing. The decision stated that conditions beyond a boundary line do not entitle a player to relief in playing a ball lying within bounds. Rule 7-4 (superseded by Rule 31 in the present code) refers only to artificial obstructions within the limits of the course.

I assume the same decision would be given under the present Rule 31, particularly since Definition 20 defines an obstruction as "anything artificial . . . on the course."

I also assume that a player could not remove an artificial object which lay out of bounds when the object interfered with his stance or swing and was movable. Definition 17, defining loose impediments as "natural objects", does not limit such

objects to the course, and Rule 18-1 entitles a player to remove loose impediments but does not restrict such removal to only loose impediments lying on the course.

The Rules thus appear to make a distinction in the rights of a player as to a movable obstruction and a loose impediment. To set me straight in the matter I ask the following questions:

A, B and C are playing in the same group. On one hole each of their tee shots comes to rest a few yards apart, and each ball just barely inside the staked boundary. The backswing of each player is interfered with by an object which is out of bounds: A by a building, B by a discarded wood bench and C by a fallen tree branch.

**1.** Is A entitled to relief from the building under Rule 31-27

**2.** May B move the bench under Rule 31-1?

**3.** May C move the branch under Rule 18-1?

Question by: RALPH W. MILLER  
Los Angeles, Cal.

**A. 1:** No. A building is not an obstruction under Definition 20 when it is off the course.

**2.** Yes. A may move the bench, so far as the Rules of Golf are concerned, if it is movable without delaying play, but he does not move it under any authority contained in Rule 31-1. A bench is not an obstruction under Definition 20 when it is off the course. However, the Rules do not prohibit the movement of anything loose and movable off the course.

**3.** Yes. See Rule 18-1.

The distinction between the situations you cite is that, when the player seeks relief from the building, he must move the ball. When he seeks relief from the loose objects, he moves only the loose objects.

### ***Ball Strikes Bag Carried By Common Caddie***

USGA 55-23

R. 4, 34-3a, 34-3b, 36-5, 38-3

**Q.** Player A. and Player B. were play-

ing the qualifying round of the Club Championship when A blasted from a sand trap bordering a green. A's ball struck the bag of B, which was suspended from the shoulder of their common caddie, as was also the bag of A.

A and B figured that no penalty was involved and posted and attested their respective scores accordingly.

A short while later B mentioned the incident to the Golf Chairman, who immediately disqualified A, citing Rules 26-3a and 38-3. B was also disqualified, subsequently, for having attested the score posted by A.

B later protested the disqualifications, maintaining that A and B were fellow-competitors and that Rule 26-3b should apply rather than Rule 26-3a. After considering the matter, the Chairman advised that the disqualifications would stand, holding there should have been a two-stroke penalty pursuant to Rule 34-3a.

If Rule 34-3a is to be considered applicable to this case, the question is whether the bag of B (the fellow-competitor) is considered part of the person (the common caddie) attending the flagstick. The rule is not clear on this point, whereas Rule 26-3b specifically refers to "a fellow-competitor, his caddie, clubs, ball or other equipment—."

**A.** Assuming that the caddie was attending the flagstick when A's ball struck B's bag, A sustained a two-stroke penalty under 34-3a or 34-3b. The Rule applies to striking not only the person attending the flagstick but also to equipment carried by him.

As A breached Rule 38-3, he was subject to disqualification. (For possible modification of penalty, see Rule 36-5).

B was not subject to disqualification unless the Committee considered that he and A had agreed to waive a penalty they knew about—see Rule 4.

The fact that the caddie was employed by both competitors is immaterial, as Rule 34-3 pertains to any person attending a

flagstick. USGA recommendations for local rules to cover double caddying provide that in stroke play "The caddie is always deemed to be employed by the player affected."

### ***Ball In Lateral Water Hazard***

USGA 55-28  
R. 33-3b

**Q.** A ball lies in the rough, immediately behind the starting point of a lateral water hazard. The ball is struck straight ahead; it crosses the starting point of the lateral water hazard and follows the course of the hazard before dropping into the water. In its flight it does not cross any margin of the hazard except the margin at the starting point.

The opponent claims that the player, in proceeding under Rule 33-3b, must drop a ball within two club-lengths of the point where the ball crossed the starting point of the hazard margin.

The player claims that he may drop a ball opposite the place where the ball entered the water. He contends that the place where the ball actually dropped into the water is the point where the ball last crossed the hazard margin.

Who is right?

Question by: RAY LAWRENSEN  
Washington, D. C.

**A.** The opponent is right.

As the ball in flight followed the course of the hazard, the last point of crossing the hazard margin was the identical point where it first crossed. The place where it actually entered the water is not a margin of the hazard for purposes of the Rules.

Consideration might be given to classifying the end margin as a water hazard rather than as a lateral water hazard.

### ***Lifting Ball in Match and Stroke Competition***

USGA 55-34

D. 13, 17, 28;

R. 11-5, 18, 24-1a, 24-2, 32-1, 35-2a

**Q. 1:** In medal play one competitor is three feet off the green, directly in line to

the pin of a second competitor thirty yards out. May the second competitor ask the first competitor to mark his ball? What is the situation in match play?

**A. 1:** (a) *Stroke play*—Rule 24-2 allows a competitor to have any other player's ball lifted if it interfere with his play. Relative positions are not a factor.

(b) *Match play*—Assuming that the players are opponents, Rule 24-1a allows lifting only when the balls are within a club-length, and Rule 35-2a allows lifting when the ball nearer the hole lies on the putting green.

### ***Fallen Tree On Course***

**Q. 2:** In a medal play tournament there is a severe rain and windstorm at the end of the first day of play. On the second day the first threesome out finds a large tree has been blown on to a fairway, and is still attached to the stump. One competitor's ball is found among the branches of this tree. What is his procedure? What in match play.

**A. 2:** In stroke play and match play, the player may discontinue play and request a ruling from the committee. The committee would be justified in declaring the area covered by the fallen tree to be ground under repair—see Definition 13 and Rule 32-1.

In the absence of such a ruling by the committee, if the tree were fallen beyond redemption, it could be regarded as a loose impediment—see Definition 17 and Rule 18.

In stroke play, if a ruling has not been obtained, the competitor may play out the ball in play and a second ball as provided in Rule 11-5.

For definition of threesome, see Definition 28.

Questions by: S. W. CREEKMORE  
Fort, Smith, Ark.

### ***Testing Surface Behind Ball***

**Q.:** To what extent may a player test the hitting surface behind a ball, either with his hand or with his club head, other

than what might be learned when normally addressing the ball?

Question by: NORMAN HAINE  
Camden, N. J.

**A.:** *Through the green* (Definition 34), the matter is covered by Rule 17. Although there is no specific prohibition against testing the surface behind a ball, the player must be careful not to improve the lie of the ball or otherwise to violate the several provisions of Rule 17, including the following:

Rule 17-1—Improving the surface so as to affect a lie.

Rule 17-2—Touching long grass more than is necessary to find and to identify the ball.

Rule 17-3—Improving the lie by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed or growing. "The club may be grounded only lightly and must not be pressed on the ground."

*On the putting green* (Definition 25), testing the surface is prohibited by Rule 35-1d.

### **Four-Man Teams**

USGA 55-41  
R. 5, 17-1, 17-3, 41-4

**Q. 1:** In a four-man team best-ball competition, where all four competitors are playing together, is there a penalty if one of the competitors putts and his ball knocks a teammate's ball into the cup?

**A. 1:** The Rules of Golf do not specifically cover play by four-man teams but the principle of Rule 41-4 would apply. This provides in part that "When the balls concerned lie within 20 yards of the hole and neither ball is in a hazard, if a competitor's ball strike any other ball the competitor shall incur a penalty of two strokes and shall play his ball as it lies. The other ball shall be at once replaced."

### **Improving Surface In Bunker**

**Q. 2:** A player in a sand bunker in surveying his shot moves through the sand

toward the hole two or more times and each time tramps in the line of his shot until he levels the sand considerably. Then he uses a putter to roll the ball along the beaten path onto the green. What is the penalty, if any, and under what Rule is the penalty called?

**A. 2:** The player you cite has violated Rule 17-1 and has incurred a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 5. See also Rule 17-3.

Questions by: W. F. BEBOUT  
Uniontown, Ohio

### **Ant Hills Are Loose Impediments**

USGA 55-39  
D 17; R. 18

**Q.:** Does the ruling regarding burrowing animals apply to ant hills and ant holes?

Questions by: A. M. LOEB  
Chicago, Ill.

**A.:** No. Ants are considered insects, rather than burrowing animals; see Definition 17. Therefore, ant hills, as casts made by insects, are loose impediments. A player is entitled to relief from a loose impediment as prescribed under Rule 18.

### **Ball Holed Is Not Lost**

R & A 54-63  
R. 29

**Q.:** One of our members, after playing his second shot at the 14th hole, which is 479 yards, with a standard scratch score of five, could not find his ball and, after looking for the statutory time, concluded his ball was lost.

He returned to where he had played his second shot and dropped another ball, and it was not until he was holing out with his second ball that he discovered his first ball was in the cup.

Does the score of two with the original ball stand or, by concluding the ball was lost and dropping a second ball, does the score with the latter count?

**A.:** The score with the first ball should count.