

# "WINTER RULES" FROM ALL SIDES

## A Symposium

### What Are They?

by FRANCIS OUMET

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Winter rules! What are they?

I presume they mean "preferred lies", for I know of no code for playing golf other than the Rules of Golf. To use the expression "winter rules" is as dangerous as it is confusing, because it implies the existence of a code that does not exist.

Let us be realistic and admit that, when we indulge in the privilege of placing our ball at will through the fairways we are not playing the game of golf, but a synthetic form thereof. One of the most fundamental rules of all is that which states, in substance, that a ball must not be touched or moved, except in the act of striking it. Proper exceptions are amply provided for under the rules.

I have no quarrel with a committee sug-

gesting, and even requesting, the use of preferred lies in the off season. I do object strenuously to such a practice when the course is officially opened for play in the springtime until it is closed to formal play in the Fall.

Opposed as I am to any deviation of play away from the rules, I would suggest this alternative to Golf Committees whose task it is, among others, to control the play of their membership. Schedule both the opening and closing of the course for regular play. During this period, it is to be understood that players are bound to conform to the Rules of Golf without exception. Beyond this period, and I bitterly dislike saying this, give them their preferred lies, if it seems wise to do so, but not under the cloak of winter rules.

### How They Affect You

by HAROLD SARGENT

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World War II presented many problems to the game of golf. Most of them have since disappeared, but we still have with us a few of the wartime golfing habits tending to detract from the true spirit of the game.

One of the habits remaining with particular tenacity is that of playing what is commonly referred to as winter rules. This is, of course, the practice of improving the player's lie in the fairway.

#### *Reasons For Winter Rules*

There were two major reasons for the adoption and acceptance of winter rules, the first being the effort to save wear and tear on golf balls, and second, the curtailment of expenditures on the up-keep of golf courses. The former was necessitated by the wartime scarcity of rubber and the resulting government ban on manufactur-

ers, designed to conserve the existing supply. The latter became an important factor when, for a variety of reasons, many clubs found it impossible to maintain their courses in pre-war condition.

During the war, these conditions constituted valid reasons for the practice of playing winter rules. However, there is now no reason for compromising the basic principle of golf, that is, "Nothing may be done to improve your lie." This principle has always been a prominent tradition, as well as a rule, of the game.

The relaxation of emphasis on this principle has resulted in countless disagreements and strained relationships among golfers. These conditions must become a sad, but inevitable part of the game when equity, the basic principle and foundation of the rules of golf, is violated.

### What Does It Do To You?

However, for the moment, let's forget about violating the code and tradition of golf. What does it do to you, the golfer, and to your ability, to play golf by winter rules? In the long run, there can be no question that your ability suffers. All who have played the game of golf have had the experience of finding their ball in a close lie. When this happens it's only human nature to bemoan fate and yearn for a better lie. However, most golfers have found that by concentrating on making the shot it can be successfully played. In fact, one of the real pleasures of golf comes from making a fine shot from a close lie. On the other hand, those who have played winter rules and taken advantage of a preferred lie have realized the experience of being lulled into a relaxation of concentration. The result is, of course, a poorly played shot.

The improving of your lie can also hurt the fundamentals of your swing. For instance, when the ball is teed up in the grass, it is much more difficult to put the back-spin on it required to make it stop. As a matter of fact, the opposite happens most of the time and a high, floating shot is hit. Upon landing it continues to roll, sometimes running completely over the green.

If the ball had been lying close, it would have been necessary to hit down on the ball, catching it first, then the turf. This would have produced back-spin on the ball and it would have been an easier shot to control.

### How They Affect The Turf

by DR. MARVIN H. FERGUSON

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Improving a lie doesn't help the turf, but improving the turf helps the lie.

Frequently one hears a statement similar to this, "I would just as soon play the ball as it lies, but we observe 'winter rules' and improve lies at our club in order to save the turf." It is rather difficult to perceive how the improving of a lie will benefit

### Natural Skill Is Lost

One of the cardinal fundamentals of placing back-spin on the ball is a steady head position. The weight should be slightly in front of the ball at impact and the



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hitting action of the hands should be delayed. It is normal, and natural, to delay the hitting action of the hands when hitting down on a ball in a close lie. However, if the practice of improving the lie is followed for any length of time, this natural skill is lost. It then becomes an effort, and much practice is required to regain this skill.

An added injustice is inflicted on golfers who persist in playing preferred lies. Once the habit has been developed, it is extremely difficult for these players to compete in tournaments where they would be compelled to play the ball as it lies. They are guilty of denying themselves the opportunity of developing a game worthy of tournament competition and are deprived of enjoying this phase of the game.

In the interest of maintaining the traditions of golf and for the good of our personal game, let's play the game by the Rules of Golf and abolish winter rules.

the turf. The reasoning is rather hard to follow.

If a piece of turf is thin and "cuppy", so as to afford a faulty lie, then it would appear that little further damage could be done by taking a divot from that spot. However, if the ball is taken from such an undesirable spot and moved a few inches