



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. "56-1" means the first decision issued in 1956. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1956 Rules of Golf.

"Where the Ball Entered" Casual Water

R & A 56-54
R. 32

Q.: Under Rule 32-3 do the words "Where the ball entered the area" mean where the ball last crossed the margin of the casual water or where the ball actually entered the water?

The query arises from the fact that recent abnormal rain has created a lake across the fairway of one of our links and associates find it a very severe hazard to drop a ball as near as possible to the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the casual water, but if they are able to drop at the point as near as possible to where the ball entered the water the re-crossing of the water can be avoided.

A.: In Rule 32-3 the words "where the ball entered the area" mean where the ball actually entered the casual water, ground under repair or other conditions covered by the Rule, as distinct from the point where the ball crossed the margin of the area in question. If a ball actually pitches in the area, therefore, a ball should be dropped as near as possible to the point

where the original ball was seen to pitch, but not nearer the hole. If there is no evidence as to the precise point where the ball actually pitched, a ball should be dropped behind the point where the original ball crossed the margin of the area. There must be reasonable evidence that the ball has in fact been lost in the area.

Identification of Ball

USGA 56-38
R.16, 23-1

Q.: I hit a ball into a swamp, and after a search we found a ball half buried in its own hole where it had hit into the black muck. There was no identification mark showing on the part of the ball which was visible.

I called my opponent over to look at the situation. I explained to him that there was no identifying mark visible on the ball, which he could see for himself. I also stated that by pressing down and forward on the ball with my finger I could easily rotate the ball in its own hole until we could see if it was mine. This I proceeded to do with my opponent watching closely. It turned out to be my Maxfli #5, and I blasted it out.

When we got on the green, my opponent had two putts for a win and after a poor approach putt called an infraction of the Rules on me.

A thorough search of the rules book fails to turn up any infraction, since the ball was not lifted, nor was it moved in any way from its embedded position. Can you give me an official ruling?

Question by: JUDD POLLOCK
New York, N. Y.

A.: If the swamp was not within the limits of a water hazard, you were entitled to identify your ball under Rule 23-1 and your method of doing so did not violate that Rule.

Rule 23-1 does not apply in a hazard, and, if the swamp was within the limits of a water hazard, you violated Rule 16 by touching your ball purposely and incurred a penalty of loss of hole.

Disposition of Prize When Finalist Defaults

USGA 56-39
Tournament

Q.: In our club championship, the runner-up-to-be could have played but defaulted in a fit of temper. Does she still get the runner-up prize?

Question by: MRS. HARRY S. MCCARTHY
Brunswick, Maine

A.: The Rules of Golf do not cover, and the question should be settled by the committee in charge. Under the custom of the game, the runner-up prize would be awarded to the player who defaulted. We believe she is entitled to it unless there are unusual factors which the committee considers to be of a disqualifying nature.

Players Must Await Decision re Discontinuance

USGA 56-40
R. 11-1, 11-3, 36-4c

Q.: A four-ball match completed the 18th hole all even and the two teams halved the 19th hole. The 19th hole was played in semi-darkness. On the 20th tee, the second extra hole, a member of one

team stated that it was too dark to continue play. This was met with a statement from the members of the opposing team that this being a sudden death play-off, the match must continue. The player protesting continuance of play then declared that he was going to obtain a ruling from the Tournament Committee and began to walk to the clubhouse.

His opposing team teed off and commenced play on the second extra hole. The partner of the player who was seeking the ruling, after the opposing team had teed off (that team having the honor), then hit his tee shot and commenced play of the 20th hole.

The Tournament Committee, upon being approached by the player seeking the ruling, ruled that play must be discontinued because of darkness, and a messenger was sent out to inform the contestants of the decision. By the time the messenger had reached the contestants, both players of the team who had insisted upon playing the second extra hole had hit their second shots. The partner of the player who sought the ruling had also hit his second shot. Despite the receipt of information that play was to be stopped, the team continued play and holed out, but the partner of the player seeking the ruling picked up. The Tournament Committee was then asked to make a ruling and to declare the winner of the match, with the team completing the second extra hole asserting that they had won, and the team which had requested the ruling as to continuance of play asserting that the match must be continued under playable conditions.

The Tournament Committee then ruled that play must be deemed stopped at the conclusion of the 19th hole, and that the match must continue the following morning commencing with play of the 20th hole. Our reason was that we declared conditions unplayable upon first knowledge that a 20th hole was required, and that where a ruling was requested as to continuance of play a duty was on the team opposing the party who had requested such ruling to withhold play until the Tournament Committee could rule. We were met

with the argument and the fact that the partner of the person requesting the ruling had continued play. At the time the decision was requested the Tournament Committee did not know that play had started on the 20th hole.

We should like to know if we were correct in our ruling.

Question by: JAMES F. DELEONE
Columbus, Ohio

A.: We concur in your decision. As there was no referee, the player who discontinued play to seek a ruling from the Committee entered a claim properly under Rules 11-1 and 11-3. The other players should not have continued play until the Committee had ruled on the question.

The Committee's ruling was made in accordance with Rule 36-4c. The play which took place on the 20th hole must be disregarded.

Play Completed When Ball Is Holed

R & A 56-83
R. 6, 7

Q.: One of our members playing in the monthly medal competition was playing in the fifth hole which has a blind approach to the green. He played his third shot from well down the slope and apparently did not see his shot finish.

Eventually he came across a ball lying on the front of the sloping portion of the green, and played it up towards the flag. When he was ready to putt he found he had played the wrong ball from the front of the green. On looking round, he found his ball in the hole, having holed out with his third shot.

One rule states that, in the event of playing a wrong ball, he adds two penalty shots to his score, ignoring any shot played with the wrong ball. Another rule states that once he has holed out, nothing can be done to affect his score for the hole.

My interpretation of the rules was that having played the wrong ball before he knew that he had holed out with his third shot he incurred a penalty of two shots.

Some of the competition committee dif-

fer in their opinion, and I should be glad if you could give me a definite ruling on this point.

A.: Once a player has holed his ball in accordance with the Rules, he has completed the play of that hole. In this case, the wrong ball was played after the completion of the hole, and strokes played with it do not count towards the score. There is no penalty. Your attention is also drawn to Rules of Golf Decision 52-20 which deals with a somewhat similar case.

Referee Cannot Authorize Violation of Rules

USGA 56-41

Et. 7, 35-1b, 35-2a, 36-7

Q. 1: In the State Tournament only USGA Rules were played. In the final, can the referee, the pro of the club, grant permission to a player to repair a divot mark in the line of her putt?

A. 1: The referee had no right to permit the player to repair a ball mark in the line of her putt. Rule 35-1b prohibits the player from touching the line of putt prior to making a stroke (with certain exceptions which do not apply here). A local rule which would permit repair of a ball mark on the line of putt would conflict with the Rules of Golf and should not be adopted—see Rule 36-7.

After the players have holed out, any damage to the putting green made by the ball or the player should be carefully repaired—see Etiquette 7.

Interference Must Be Physical and Reasonable

Q. 2: In match play the player's ball is approximately four feet from the hole. The opponent's ball was 2½ feet directly above the cup, on a line almost at right angles to the line of the player's putt, and could never have been a physical, mental or visual interference to the player. May the player who is away ask her opponent to lift her ball?

A. 2: Interference in the sense of Rules 35-2a and 35-3a means only possible phys-

ical interference. The possibility of such physical interference must be reasonable. It would appear that the player away had no right to ask her opponent to lift her ball under Rule 35-2a.

Questions by: MRS. MAURICE GLICK
Baltimore, Md.

Ball in Creek Carried Out of Bounds

R & A 56-80
R. 33

Q.: A creek with running water crosses the fifth hole. This is a water hazard. On the right of the hole is out of bounds.

A player drove a ball from the tee into the water hazard on the course. After searching for about four minutes the ball was found out of bounds still in the creek, having been carried out of bounds by the flowing water. (It is estimated that the water carried the ball a distance of about 30 yards.) What is the proper action for the player to take?

A.: The player should act in accordance with Rule 33-2a or b. The fact that the ball has been carried out of bounds by the flow of water does not alter the procedure laid down in the Rule.

Treatment of Logs Too Heavy to Move

R & A 56-89
Def. 17; R. 29-2; Appendix I.

Q.: On a recent mixed foursome Stableford competition, one of the competitors drove a ball which finished up touching a palm tree that had been felled about two years ago and which was lying in the rough a few feet from the fairway. The tree trunk was about 10 to 12 inches in diameter and about 10 feet long.

The competitor tried and failed to move the log, dropped out and the partner played on. The competitor reported the matter to the Committee on completion of the round. He claimed that under Rule 31 no penalty would arise as the log was an immovable obstruction.

The Committee, however, felt otherwise, so, as under Definition 20, an obstruction had to be something artificial, and a tree trunk, although lying on the ground, was natural and not artificial. It therefore came under Definition 17.

While the Committee was still deliberating information was received that another competitor had, with the help of caddies, rolled the log away as it interfered with his swing. This information was corroborated by the player concerned. The Committee therefore imposed a penalty of two strokes under Rule 29-2b.

The following queries arise:

- (a) Was the ruling of the Committee correct?
- (b) In moving an impediment or obstruction is a player limited to the assistance that can be given by his partner and their two caddies, or, in the case of a match, by his or her caddie, or can all and sundry help?
- (c) Can a tree trunk lying on the ground be regarded as an obstruction if it is obviously too heavy to be moved?

A.: (a) (c) A log being a natural object is a loose impediment under Definition 17. It is not an obstruction. The player being unable to move the log had the alternative of playing in accordance with Rule 29-2. The ruling of the Committee was correct so far as the first competition was concerned.

(b) There is nothing in the Rules of Golf which limits the assistance a player may obtain in moving an impediment or movable obstruction. The second competitor had therefore incurred no penalty and the decision of the Committee in this case was incorrect.

It is within the powers of Committees under Appendix I to make Local Rules to deal with situations of this kind and it is recommended that they should do so in the case of large fallen branches or tree trunks which may interfere with the proper playing of the game by deeming them to be obstructions.