



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. "57-1" means the first decision issued in 1957. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1957 Rules of Golf.

Partner's Divot Interferes in Bunker

USGA 57-7
R. 11-4

Q: A and B were partners in a four-ball match. A was away, his ball being about 15 yards from the green with a bunker intervening. B was in the bunker.

A pitched to the green, and his divot landed just back of B's ball in the bunker. A picked up the divot and replaced it before B played.

1. Was A correct in replacing the divot before B played?
2. Did B incur a penalty?

Question by: DAVID BURNETT
Paterson, N. J.

A: As his partner's ball lay in a hazard, A had no right to remove a loose impediment from the hazard. In so doing he violated Rule 33-1. As his infringement was made so as to assist his partner's play, B also incurred the relative penalty, under Rule 40-3h. Thus A and B lost the hole.

It is an established principle that an injured player is not entitled to relief from the accidental acts of his own side - see, for example, Rule 40-3d.

However, had A been an opponent or a fellow-competitor of B in individual competition, we would rule differently. Such a case should be decided by equity - see Rule 11-4 - and B would have the right to remove the divot from the bunker. The principle that a player is normally entitled to the lie which his stroke gave him and to relief from the result of actions by an outside agency, an opponent or a fellow-competitor is well-established in Rules 27-1a, 27-2a and 27-3a."

Purpose of Obstruction Rule

USGA 57-8
R. 31-2

Q: If a ball came to rest so that the player is entitled to relief under Rule 31-2, and the obstruction is a water standpipe or similar obstruction which is narrow but which definitely blocks his direct line to the green, may he drop the ball to either side of the obstruction within two club-lengths, not nearer the hole but in a position which gives a direct shot toward the green?

In other words, is there any intent in the rule that the ball should be dropped

in such a position as to retain the same line?

Question by: CARL E. HAYMOND
Beverly Hills, Calif.

A: The purpose of Rule 31-2 is to give freedom to strike the ball, without regard to the effect on the line to the hole. If a player observes the provisions of the Rule, it is immaterial whether he drops the ball directly behind the obstruction or to either side of it. The Rule cannot regard any advantage or disadvantage which may incidentally result for the player in an individual case.

Ball Holed with Flagstick Attended

USGA 57-9
D. 4; R. 34-2

Q: In a match play, A is putting. He asks for the pin to be attended. A strokes the ball toward the hole and the caddie at the pin tries to remove it. The pin is stuck in the hole and is only partially removed and tilted away from the ball that is rolling toward the hole. Both A and B agree that the ball was holed under Definition 4 before the ball struck the pin.

If these facts are true, did A incur a penalty under Rule 34-2?

Question by: HERBERT HEIN
New York, N. Y.

A: Under the conditions as stated, no. If the ball was in fact holed (Definition 4) before it struck the flagstick, A did not violate Rule 34-2.

However, if there is any doubt as to whether the ball struck the flagstick before entering the hole, the doubt would have to be resolved against the player of the stroke.

Gate in Boundary Fence May be Closed

USGA 57-10
D. 20; R. 31-1

Q: On our fifth hole we have a gate which swings in from the county highway. Sometimes that gate is closed; sometimes it's open. If the gate is open, having swung

into playable territory, may a player close the gate if the ball happens to lie against it?

Question by: WILBUR F. WARNER
San Francisco, Cal.

A: A gate in a boundary fence which has been swung open onto the course constitutes a movable obstruction (Def. 20) as long as it is in that position. The player is entitled to close it under Rule 31-1.

The reverse is not true. When the gate in a boundary fence is closed it forms a part of the boundary and is not an obstruction (Definition 20). Also, a gate in a boundary fence which is swung open off the course is not an obstruction.

Ball Dropped, Then Lifted

USGA 57-11
R. 22-1, 22-2, 30-1a, 30-3, 33-2a

Q 1: A player under the belief that his ball was in a water hazard dropped a ball under Rule 33-2a. He was then informed that his ball was located outside the hazard. Under these circumstances, he cannot play the dropped ball, even under any other provisions of the rules; but Rule 22-2 states that, "A ball is in play when dropped," to which evidently must be inferred, "and when such ball must be played under the rules." Undoubtedly, if the original ball was in the hazard, even if playable, the player is confined to play the ball which he has dropped; but if it is located outside the hazard, he is compelled to play it, or treat it as unplayable, and proceed under Rule 29.

A 1: If the player dropped a ball, did not play a stroke with it, and then removed it from play, he violated Rule 22-2 and sustained a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. In stroke play he could then resume play with his previous ball. An object of Rule 22-1 and 22-2 is to prevent re-dropping a ball after it has first been dropped in a manner not conforming with Rule 22-1. The clause in Rule 22-2 "A ball is in play when dropped" must be read in conjunction with the clause which immediately follows: "and shall not be re-dropped, etc."