

# PREPARING THE COURSE FOR A COMPETITION

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**A**N uncounted number of golf championships and formal tournaments are held each year throughout the United States, and prior to each one the committee in charge comes face to face with the responsibility of preparing the course for the competition.

Many committees are knowing and experienced in this work and prepare their courses so that confusion and misunderstanding as to the application of the Rules of Golf are minimized.

Unfortunately for the well being and uniformity of the game, however, this is not true of all committees. Potential trouble spots pass unnoticed until the players themselves raise questions. Often it is impossible for the committee to resolve these questions equitably after play is under way.

A simple example is the choice of tee markers. If a committee permits a competition to start with more than one set of tee markers on the course and fails to designate clearly to all players the set to be used, some players may play a different course than other players.

Insure in advance of play that only one set of tee markers is in place on each tee or that all starters are notified of the tee markers they are to use. If strangers may be playing, it is also advisable to insure that all tees are clearly numbered so no group can inadvertently play from a wrong tee.

Another rather common occurrence is a conflict resulting from the presence on the course of a sign authorizing play at variance with the Rules of Golf or Local Rules established for the tournament. These sometimes are posted by well-meaning but poorly informed club committees and remain for years. All such signs must be

found and removed in order to insure that all players play the same game by the same Rules.

The identification and delineation of water hazards and lateral water hazards is a third important responsibility for a committee preparing a course for a competition.

Definition 14b of the Rules of Golf stipulates that any sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, or other open water course, regardless of whether or not it contains water, or anything of a similar nature is a water hazard.

When a water hazard fulfills the requirements of a lateral water hazard by Definition 14c, the committee should specifically identify it as such.

Two conditions must occur together in order to qualify a water hazard as "lateral." The body of water must run approximately parallel to the line of play *and* it must be so situated that it is not possible or is impracticable to require a player to drop his ball behind the water and keep the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin between himself and the hole, as he must do in taking relief from a regular water hazard.

The second condition is often overlooked, but it is an essential. Bodies of water which can be properly classified as "lateral" include brooks running along a boundary of the course or along a rocky or wooded area so that a player could not keep the brook between himself and the hole without dropping out of bounds or in extremely difficult terrain.

## **Stakes for Water Hazards**

The USGA carries out its responsibility under Rule 36-6 to define each type of

### PUTTERS ARE FEMININE

About the putter there is something so slender and sensitive, so fitful, capricious and fickle, shall I venture to say even at times inconsistent, that no doubt can be felt as to the sex question. Plainly, such a companion will not readily be chanced on among the common herd or met with in the crowded street: she must be sought for with care and skill. No club is so human as the putter, none so worthy the name of friend, if true, none more likely to do one an injury if disloyal and treacherous. Like so many of her sex, the putter has a touch of vanity in her nature which must be humored, if she is to be won as a faithful mistress.

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water hazard and to delineate their margins by using colored stakes. Small yellow stakes trace the limits of regular water hazards, and small red stakes mark the borders of lateral water hazards. Pointed sections of lathes, their upper ends protruding six or eight inches above ground and dipped in yellow or red paint, serve nicely.

These stakes are so placed as to include in the hazard not only the water area but rough banks and unkempt growth relating directly to it. They must follow precisely the twists and turns of the natural margin, since the line from stake to stake determines the limit of the hazard.

In Rules interpretations, stakes marking hazards are outside the hazards and they are obstructions by Definition 20, so that players are entitled to free relief from them under Rule 31.

Out of bounds should be clearly and carefully defined. Where fences are boundaries, they should be marked with signs: "Out or Bounds." Otherwise, the USGA uses large white stakes, firmly fixed and protruding two or three feet from the ground. Boundaries should be continued as far as there exists the remotest possibility of a ball going out. Boundaries are defined by the inside line, at the ground, of fence posts and stakes. Thus boundary fences and stakes are out of bounds; they are therefore not obstructions, and the Rules provide no relief from them.

Any means of marking boundaries or hazards should enable a player always to

determine the status of a ball. If stakes are used, they should be placed close enough together to enable drawing a sight from one to the next without bushes, trees or anything else intervening.

Ground under repair should also be clearly marked and its limits delineated by white lime lines or small stakes of a distinctive color. Any ground under repair should be marked additionally by a sign stating: "Ground under Repair." According to Definition 13, ground under repair is any portion of the course so marked by order of the committee. It includes material piled for removal and a hole made by a greenkeeper even when they are not so marked. A hole made by a greenkeeper is intended to mean ground temporarily opened for upkeep of the course, such as a hole made in moving sod or a tree or stump, laying pipe lines and similar conditions.

Obstructions are considered to be anything artificial, whether erected, placed or left on the course according to Definition 20. Thus, obstructions include such things as pipes, vehicles, paper, water outlets, bottles, rakes, buildings, shelters and hoses. Rule 31 provides free relief from these things.

### Clarity Essential

While many obstructions are self-evident, it is sometimes advisable to identify certain items as obstructions in order to clarify matters for players who are not entirely familiar with the Rules.

When it is deemed necessary to identify an obstruction, this should be done by fastening a sign to it stating: "Obstruction." If there is likely to be doubt as to the extent of the obstruction, the USGA draws a white lime line on the ground around it.

In preparing a course for a tournament the committee must determine whether such areas as the clubhouse and its immediate grounds, garages and maintenance barns, swimming pool, tennis courts and such areas will be considered out of bounds or obstructions. If these areas are sufficiently removed from the line of normal play or if it seems advisable to prevent

play from these areas, the USGA declares them out of bounds and marks their boundaries with large white stakes. If the classification of these areas as out of bounds might impose an unduly severe penalty because of their proximity to the line of play, they can be classified as obstructions and so identified.

When a committee is staking the margins of a hazard or otherwise delineating ground under repair or an obstruction, it must give thought to the places where players will be putting their balls into play. For example, in proceeding under Rule 32 in a case of ground under repair, a player is required to drop his ball as near as possible to the spot where it lay but not nearer the hole, outside the ground under repair. The limit of ground under repair must be drawn on ground which will enable the player to drop in a reasonable position.

The USGA Appendix to the Rules of Golf suggests specific matters for which local rules may be advisable. A committee preparing a course for a competition should consult this section on local rules.

Any local rule established for an abnormal condition must conform to the policies set forth in the Rules of Golf and a penalty stroke imposed by the Rules of Golf may not be waived by a local rule.

One of several situations where a local rule might be appropriate concerns concrete or masonry in a water hazard for the control of water. While masonry is artificial and therefore normally an obstruction, a water course lined with masonry does not conform to the intent of the rule regarding obstructions. In such a case the masonry is really a part of the water hazard. Therefore, the USGA suggests the following local rule: "Concrete, masonry or other construction in a water hazard for the control of water or as supports for bridges or bridge abutments on the banks of water hazards are not obstructions under Definition 20."

Also, situations sometimes arise in which it is obviously impracticable to require players to proceed in strict accordance with the water hazard or obstruction Rules. It may seem fairer to establish special areas

on which a ball may be dropped. Any such "drop areas" should be clearly marked with white lime lines on the ground and a sign.

#### Placement of Holes

One of the most important responsibilities of the committee in preparing a course for a tournament is the placement of the holes in the putting green for each day's play. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish fixed rules for this. Too many factors can affect a cup location. However, the committee must exercise good judgment in deciding what will give fair results under a given condition.

It is preferable to place the holes each morning for that day's play so that wind and weather conditions can be better anticipated.

The USGA generally starts with the requirement that, for an area of two to three feet around the cup, the putting surface be in good condition without any steep slopes or, if possible, any changes in the degree of slope. In other words, the green should be flat, if possible, but it does not have to be exactly level.

Next, the USGA tries to start, if possible, at least five paces away from the edge of the surface especially prepared for putting. If a bunker is close to the edge of the surface the distance should be greater, especially if the approach to the green is over the bunker.

One must consider the holding quality of the green, the length of the shot to the green, the probable prevailing conditions for play for the day, and the design of the hole.

An attempt is made to keep the course in balance each day by avoiding a predominance of front, back, right, left, or extremely difficult or easy hole positions.

In no case should cups be located in tricky places, or on sharp slopes where a ball can gather speed. A player above the hole should be able to putt boldly for it.

If it is raining or rain appears likely, it is advisable to avoid placing holes in low areas of the green where water may stand or drain off the green.