



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. "58-1" means the first decision issued in 1958. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1958 Rules of Golf.

Loose Impediment Outside Hazard May Be Moved

USGA 58-21

D. 17, R. 18-1, 18-2

Q: Player A hit his ball into the rough. The ball came to rest on a clump of dead grass which was on a rock. Directly behind the ball was another rock which obstructed the player from hitting the ball toward the green. The player moved the rock which was directly behind his ball and had an open swing directly toward the green.

Is it permissible for a player to move all loose objects such as rocks, sticks, etc., without penalty?

Question by: KENNETH R. WOODS, PRESIDENT
Missouri Sand Green Golf. Assn.
Jefferson City, Mo.

A: If the rock was not embedded, it was a loose impediment (Definition 17), and the player was within his rights in removing it—see Rule 18-1. The fact that the position of the ball was improved by removal of a loose rock has no bearing.

It is permissible to remove any loose impediment except when both the impediment and the ball lie in or touch a hazard. For ball moving after a loose impediment has been removed, see Rule 18.2.

Committee Responsible for Positioning Exempt Qualifier in Automatic Draw

USGA 58-22

Tourn.

Q1: If the defending champion is exempt from qualifying for a match play tournament, does she automatically assume the No. 2 position in the numerical draw, leaving No. 1 position for the lowest qualifier among remaining contestants?

Q2: With all byes falling in the last flight, what is the minimum number of players required for a flight of 8-16-32-64? In other words, what is the limit of byes or percentage of byes? Most of our tournaments are flights of 8 and we never allow the last flight to have more than three byes. If there are less than five girls in the last flight, we provide another type of competition or refund the entry fee.

Questions by: MRS. AL K. HALL, JR.
San Mateo, Cal.

A1: There is no rule governing the position in the draw of a defending champion who is exempt from qualifying. The matter is up to the committee in charge, which should decide in advance.

SIX OVER

Among the spectators at the New York World Telegram's famous hole-in-hole tournament were two women. One was over heard to say to the other, "You know, the closest I ever came to a hole-in-one was 7."

from The Complete Golf Joke Book
by Seymour Dunn

A2: There are no rules governing the minimum numbers of players needed for flights of 8, 16, 32 and 64, but it would be reasonable to require more than half of those numbers. For the USGA Amateur Championship, there are 56 byes in a flight of 256.

Playing of Provisional Ball

USGA 58-23
R. 29-2, 30

Q1: I should like to have the reason and basic intent of the Provisional Ball rule explained.

Q2: If a player shooting off a tee misses the shot, 40' or 50' on the fairway, and the ball is plainly in sight, and not in obvious trouble, may he invoke the provisional ball rule, and then have the opportunity to have the choice between the two tee shots?

Certainly, in my opinion this would be wrong and the player would be taking unfair advantage of the rule, despite the fact that he would be shooting three from the tee with his provisional ball.

Q3: Under tournament rules, would the situation described in Question 2 be permitted?

Questions by: M. M. BRISKIN, JR.
Chicago, Ill.

A1: The purpose of Rule 30 is to save time through play of a provisional ball when the original ball may be lost, out of bounds, unplayable, or in a water hazard or lateral water hazard.

A2: Rule 29-2 provides in part: "The player is the sole judge as to when his ball is unplayable. It may be declared

unplayable at any place on the course." The player therefore may invoke the provisional ball rule in the situation described. The stroke-and-distance penalty in Rule 29-2a is ordinarily adequate protection against abuse of the provisional ball rule.

However, the Rule may not be stretched to the point indicated in USGA Decision 53-65, as follows:

Q: What is there to prevent a player from playing a provisional ball on every par 3 hole?

A: The Rules of Golf are framed on the assumption that golfers play honestly. Permission to play a provisional ball is granted by Rule 30-1 only on the following conditions: first, when a ball may be lost, out of bounds, unplayable, or in a water hazard or lateral water hazard, and, secondly, for the sole purpose of saving time.

"If there is no reasonable possibility that the ball may be in any one of the above conditions, the player has no right to play a provisional ball, and if he does so he violates Rule 30-1, penalty for which is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. See also Rule 8, which prohibits a practice stroke during the play of a hole, and Rule 37-7, dealing with delay in play."

A3: Yes.

Player at Liberty to Straighten Flagstick

USGA 58-24
R. 34-1, 35-1h

Q: The flagstick is bent in a forward position. Is it permissible for the individual to bend the stick to straighten it? Or should he keep resetting flagstick until it is in a suitable position for putting?

Question by: BOB HAGGERTY
Edison Club
Rexford, N. Y.

A: If the flagstick is bent and it is of a material which can be straightened quickly by hand, the player may straighten it, having regard for Rule 37-7 (Undue Delay).