



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. "59-1" means the first decision issued in 1959. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1959 Rules of Golf.

Swing and Miss at Wrong Ball

USGA 58-32
D. 30, R. 21

Q: If you swing at a ball and miss it and then discover it is not your ball, what Rule applies?

Question by: W. F. Fox, Jr.
Indianapolis, Ind.

A: Rule 21 governs. The penalty is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. See Definition 30.

Caddie Throws Ball, Then Returns It

USGA 58-34
R. 23-3

Q: A competitor in a 36-hole stroke play tournament discovered after reaching the third green that his ball had been thrown from the rough into the fairway and then returned to the rough by his own caddie after the caddie was instructed by another caddie that it was against the Rules to move the ball. There were several witnesses to the act. The players on the tee were hidden by a hill and a very large tree and did not see the caddie remove

the ball from the rough. The caddie was very inexperienced.

Upon hearing this, the player promptly penalized himself two strokes and finished the 18-hole round. It was determined beyond doubt that the ball was moved.

Upon completion of the round the official ruling was that the two-stroke penalty was removed on the grounds that an official scorer had not seen the act and that the evidence was only hearsay.

Should the player have been relieved of the penalty? Should the player be penalized two strokes because his caddie moved the ball from the rough to the fairway and back again? Or should the player have four strokes penalty for having the ball moved from the rough and back again to the rough?

Question by: FRANK MARCHI
Dayton, Ohio

A: Rule 23-3 governs.

The competitor incurred a penalty of two strokes because his caddie lifted his ball without sanction under the Rules. He was required to replace his ball and complete the play of the hole before playing from the fourth tee.

If he failed to return and replace his ball in this manner, he incurred a penalty of disqualification.

There is no double penalty.

Stick Holding Ball Violates Rule 16

USGA 58-41
R. 16

Q: A player set a stick in the ground against his ball to prevent it from moving when he removed an impediment. Was this an infraction of Rule 16 with its two-stroke penalty for stroke play.

Question by: GARLAND R. JAMES
Portsmouth, Va.

A: Yes.

Testing Hazard and Improving Line of Play

USGA 58-45
R. 17-3

Q: In a stroke play tournament A hit his second shot on a 312-yard hole short of the green, the ball rolling over the green, through the fringe behind the green and around the corner of a shallow sand trap. His ball lay behind the trap, in the grass, with a somewhat downhill lie caused by the slight mound guarding the trap. The trap was between his ball and the flagstick. After looking the shot over, A walked to the edge of the sand trap and swished his club through the sand two or three times. The club was a nine iron. The only apparent reason for this action was to see if the condition of the sand would permit the play of a rolling shot, either with a putter or with a four or five iron. After seeing the consistency of the sand, A played the shot with his nine iron.

While no player called a rule infraction, several people in the gallery, as well as some contestants who had finished their rounds, felt that this action of A was an infraction. Specifically, it was contended that his action involved testing the consistency of the hazard prior to executing the shot.

Question by: ARTHUR R. WYATT
Champaign, Ill.

A: The Rules do not prohibit a player from testing the condition of a hazard except when his ball lies in a hazard.

However, if the player's actions improved his line of play by moving, bending or breaking anything fixed, with certain exceptions which are not pertinent in this case, he violated Rule 17-3. Sand is considered a thing fixed.

Mark Behind Ball Is Not Permitted

USGA 59-1
R. 9-2

Q: A player habitually uses a piece of paper, a cigarette or any handy device to guide him in lining up his tee and fairway shots. He does this by placing the object behind the ball in such a manner as to indicate the line of flight he wishes the ball to take. It is the contention of another player that Rule 9-2 prohibits such action.

Who is right?

Question by: MARVIN LEFFLER
Flushing, N. Y.

A: The latter player is correct. A player may not place a mark either in front of or behind his ball, or in front of or behind the hole, to indicate the line of play without violating Rule 9-2.

Penalties Cancelled When Round Is Cancelled

USGA 59-2
R. 36 4c, 37-6

Q: In stroke play a competitor sustained a penalty of disqualification (he discontinued play for personal reasons, in violation of Rule 37-6; no question of the course's playability was involved at the time).

Subsequently the entire round and all scores made therein were cancelled because of unplayable conditions, the Committee acting under Rule 36 4c, and the round was re-scheduled for a later time.

Did cancellation of the round automatically cancel all penalties made during the round, and is the disqualified competitor now entitled to play in the re-scheduled round?

Question by: JIMMY MANN
St. Petersburg, Fla.

A: Yes (assuming there was no dishonesty). All penalties are cancelled when a stroke play round is cancelled—see Rule 36-4c.

Ball Hit Accidentally Through the Green

USGA 59-4
D. 14, 30; R. 27-1c, 33-1

Q: Player through the green takes a practice swing and accidentally hits his

ball off the toe of his club. Is this counted as a stroke?

A1: The player incurs a penalty stroke and the ball shall be played as it then lies. Rule 27-1c governs when a ball in play is moved accidentally by the player.

A stroke, according to Definition 30, is "the forward movement of the club made with the intention of fairly striking at and moving the ball." The answer above accepts at face value the statement that the movement of the ball by the player was accidental.

However, where there is any question about intention in such a circumstance, the player must be deemed to have played a stroke. The effect under the Rules would of course be the same.

Touching Grass in Hazard

Q2a: Player's ball is lying in a shallow water hazard. Player starts his backswing and accidentally touches some tall grass growing out of the water. Is there a penalty for grounding club in hazard?

b: Player takes practice swing in same water hazard. He does not touch the water, but he does swing through and touch some tall grass. Is there a penalty?

A2a: No. The grass may be touched to the limited extent provided in Rule 33-1b. Distinction is made between soling the club and merely touching the top of the grass.

b: Grass in a water hazard is part of the hazard and when a ball lies therein, nothing shall be done which may in any way improve its lie or test the condition of the hazard; see Definition 14 and Rule 33-1. A penalty is incurred if the player, in making a practice stroke, either improves his lie or tests the condition of the hazard.

Questions by: NORMAN M. LAPKIN
New York, N. Y.

Ball Crossing Boundary but Lying on Course

USGA 59-5
D. 21; LR

Q: Our course is located so that a four-lane street runs between the two nines and they are not connected except by a subway. The No. 1 hole is out of bounds right and No. 16 is out of bounds right, both into the street. On occasion a ball

goes from No. 1 into No. 16 and sometimes the player wants to play it. I have ruled that since the ball went out of bounds and did not return to that side of the course the ball is out of bounds. (No board of directors would allow a player to play over a highway where thousands of cars pass daily.)

How would the USGA rule?

Question by: JERRY BARBER
Los Angeles, Cal.

A: In the absence of a local rule to the contrary, such a ball is in bounds as it lies on the course.

In a case such as this, it is recommended that the club adopt a local rule to clarify the matter. Each such case should be decided on its merits, depending upon whether or not it is reasonable or feasible to play from one part of the course across out of bounds to another part of the course. Attention is called to Definition 21, which provides in part: "Out of bounds" is ground on which play is prohibited."

In the circumstances described above, it would seem advisable to prohibit playing across the highway by adopting a local rule somewhat as follows:

"A ball which crosses an out-of-bounds line near _____ Street and comes to rest beyond it is out of bounds even though it may lie on another part of the course."

In a case where playing across such an out of bounds is permitted, a local rule is not necessary but would be useful in resolving any doubts, as follows:

"A ball which crosses an out-of-bounds line near the public road and comes to rest anywhere on the course is in bounds. (The road is out of bounds.)"

Casual Water on Green, Ball off Green

USGA 59-6
R. 32-1c

Q: Casual water on the putting green intervenes between the hole and a ball lying off the putting green. The ball does not lie in or touch casual water.

Is the player entitled to any relief from the casual water on the putting green?

Question by: ROBERT A. ROOS
San Francisco, Cal.

A: No. Rule 32-1c applies only when the ball itself lies on the putting green.