



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.

Bridge In Hazard

USGA 59-19
R. 31-2

Q: If a ball comes to rest so close to a bridge over a shallow ditch that it interferes with the player's swing, is the player entitled to relief? Suppose the ball is in the hazard close to the bridge?

Question by: C. R. AULT
Birmingham, Ala.

A: The player is entitled to relief in both instances (see Rule 31-2). If the ball is in the hazard, the player must drop the ball in the hazard.

Distance Markers

USGA 59-22
Miscellaneous

Q: Is there a USGA Rule prohibiting markers on the golf course indicating a distance of 150 yards from the markers to the green? If there is such a ruling, is it permissible to plant small trees at distances of 150 yards from the greens?

Question by: A. W. MITCHELL
Denville, N. J.

A: There is nothing in the Rules of Golf to prohibit use of markers indicating the distance to the putting green.

However, distance markers are prohibited in competitions conducted by the USGA.

Effective Handicap

USGA 59-23
R. 36-1, 36-5, 37-4, 38-3, 41-7
Handicap Decision 59-5

Q: Our association held a one-day, handicap four-ball tournament on July 10, net prizes only.

A and B entered as a team and sent in their entry during the latter part of June, indicating handicaps of 7 and 7. They won the tournament with a net score of 139; two teams tied for second with 140 and six teams tied for fourth with 141.

On July 11 a protest was lodged against the winners on the basis their handicaps were incorrect. I investigated and found that the handicap committee at their club had revised the handicaps of all members on July 1. This action is taken monthly. The handicaps of A and B were reduced to 6.

B played in a proam tournament on July 6 and used his revised handicap of 6. He will be out of town for some time and is not available for comment. I have

talked to A, who states he was of the opinion that he should use the handicaps originally sent in even though the tournament was held ten days after the handicaps were revised.

Any advice you can give me to help decide the proper action to take will be deeply appreciated.

Question by: RAY LAWRENSEN
Adelphi, Md.

A: All players in the one-day handicap tournaments should have used handicaps which were in effect at the time of the competition, unless there were any rule or custom to the contrary. (See Rule 37-4 for the players' responsibility.)

The Committee would be justified in disqualifying players who played with handicaps higher than their actual handicaps at the time (see Rules 38-3 and 41-7). For the Committee's right to waive or to modify a disqualification penalty in exceptional individual cases, see Rule 36-5.

If any competitor played with a handicap lower than his actual handicap, his score should stand as returned (see Rule 38-3).

The Committee should publish in advance the conditions under which a competition will be played (see Rule 36-1).

No Free Relief From Boundary

USGA 59-24
D. 20; R. 29-2, 31

Q: Our seventh hole is a par 5 dog-leg on the drive to the left, with an interior angle of about 120 degrees. Along the left side of the first leg, and on our property line, is a fence consisting of a masonry wall about four feet high, topped by wire netting. Often a sliced drive hits this fence and the ball falls down against the bottom of the wall or so close to it that it cannot be played by a right-handed player, and, even if played, it must be along the line of the fence instead of towards the hole.

What is the ruling on such a lie? May the ball ever be dropped (and where) without penalty?

We have no local rule on this situation and have said that a ball could only be lifted under Rule 29, Clause 2. This is, to an extent, justified by the fact that if

the fence were not there, the ball would probably have fallen out of bounds.

Question by: S. D. BROWN
Pine Orchard, Conn.

A: Walls, fences, stakes, railings or similar objects defining out of bounds are not obstructions—see Definition 20—and the player is not entitled to free relief under Rule 31. Relief may be obtained only under Rule 29-2.

Conceded Hole Won On Infraction

USGA 59-25
D. 28; R. 11-1, 21-2

Q: A and B are engaged in a match. X and L complete the "foursome" but are not engaged in match.

On Hole 16 A and B are all even. A and X drive near the rough on the left side of the fairway. Y drives down the middle and B into the right rough.

A hits first and puts his shot on the green. X and Y then hit their shots. B hits his second shot last, into the trap in front of the green. After three unsuccessful attempts in getting out, B picks up his ball and concedes the hole to A.

Upon reaching green, A discovers and declares that he had hit X's ball to the green. B immediately claims the hole as his.

Up to the time A had discovered his mistake and after B had picked up and conceded the hole to A, no player was aware that any infraction had been committed.

Since the last two holes were halved, this was the deciding hole in the match.

Question by: BERNARD J. BOLES
Buffalo, N. Y.

A: B won the match. B made a proper claim before either he or A played from the next teeing ground—see Rule 11-1.

A lost the 16th hole under Rule 21-2, which provides in part: "If a player play a stroke with any wrong ball except in a hazard, he shall lose the hole." Thus, the hole was decided when A played the wrong ball; what happened thereafter was irrelevant.

X and Y were outside agencies. The case illustrates the inadvisability of constituting matches and groupings in any manner other than as provided in Definition 28.