

SENIOR GOLFERS AS RULES EXEMPLARS

By
FRANK ROSS

Today gin rummy has become an important side attraction to the game of golf. But, when playing with others from distant locations, you should first learn the local rules. How much for a gin? For an undercut? Do you turn up the eleventh card?

Isn't it fortunate that we don't have to go through the same procedure for a game of golf? But, wait a minute—aren't we getting into the same situation in respect to golf? Common questions today are—Are we playing winter or summer rules? How about conceded putts? "Within the leather?"

I'm exaggerating, you say? Let's look at the record.

How many tournaments have you played in the last year where preferred lies were allowed. Plenty, I'm sure. And did you nudge the ball with the clubhead? Did you pick it up and place it within six inches of its original position, or did you just put it on a good piece of grass somewhere in the vicinity?

Conceded putts—How many times have you felt an opponent was too "tight" because he wouldn't call a putt of yours a "gimmie" after you had given him one. I played in a stroke play tournament last year where the committee actually ruled in advance that all putts "within the leather" were conceded.

Two fine golfers and good sportsmen were overheard talking recently. The first one took the position he would give his opponent a short putt, but he would expect him to play according to the Rules. The other contended that he would not call a technical rule on an opponent, but he expected every putt to be holed. A bystander commented—"Why don't you two fellows play the Rules the USGA has adopted for everybody instead of trying to make a code of your own?"

A short time back I played in an important sectional senior championship tournament. There was a list of local rules almost a page long. The very first

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Throughout a long, fine career, Frank Ross has been a devoted follower of The Rules of Golf. He was the U.S. Seniors Champion in 1953, a former president of the Connecticut State Golf Association and he served in 1938-39 on the USGA Sectional Affairs Committee.

local rule was "All Caddy Penalties Are Waived." Think of the opportunities for misunderstandings.

You have heard that old argument over "Who was the best golfer?" Candidates mentioned are Harry Vardon, Walter Hagen, Bob Jones and Ben Hogan. That question never can be answered definitely, but in such discussions somebody frequently says; "Well, if Bob Jones wasn't the best golfer he was certainly one of the finest sportsmen that ever played the game." Bob did many things that earned him that tribute and not the least was his unflinching observance of the Rules even to the point of calling a penalty that nobody but he had seen. It cost him the National Open at Worcester, Mass., in 1925.

This grand old game of ours is gloriously rich in its traditions, its sportsmanship, and its unique position that the player himself is often the judge and the jury. One cardinal reason for that rich heritage is the willingness of players to observe the Rules of the game.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a tendency today to take liberties, to make the game easier, and to ease our conscience by little violations that we claim "didn't really give me an advantage."

We seniors have had the joys of playing the game for years. Let's live up to the Rules of Golf and show the younger players that there is a lot more to this game than the score we turn in. If we can't set such an example we have missed a golden opportunity to repay the game for some of the joy and pleasure it has given us these many years.