

GOLF'S UNWRITTEN RULES

BY

JOSEPH C. DEY, JR.
USGA Executive Director

Did you ever realize that an unwritten code is the source of the actual Rules of Golf?

The essences of the unwritten code have been clothed in words in a new book entitled "The Principles Behind the Rules of Golf." The result is an outstanding addition to the literature of the game. If you really want to know what the Rules are all about—in fact, what golf is all about—this little book of 102 pages is required reading.

Very few people in the world are qualified to handle the subject, and none is more qualified than Richard S. Tufts. His book is a labor of love from start to finish, down to his private publication of it. Mr. Tufts' work is the fruit of a lifetime of study of golf and most particularly as a member of the USGA Rules of Golf Committee from 1938 to the present, including the Chairmanship in 1954-55, and as a member of the Joint Negotiating Committee of the USGA and Royal and Ancient GC of St. Andrews in 1951-55-59.

"The Principles Behind the Rules of Golf" is not a case history of decisions on fine points. Rather, it treats of the broad and sometimes deep concepts from which the Rules spring—their philosophies and their ideals.

As Mr. Tufts has written: "Running through the Rules are underlying principles that, like the steel rods which lie below the surface of reinforced concrete, serve to bind together the brittle material and to give it strength." Mr. Tufts, who was USGA President in 1956-57, takes you on a guided tour "by following the thread of each principle separately as it weaves through the Rule Book."

There are two great principles of golf, as Mr. Tufts sees it.

First, "You play the course as you find it. This simply means that the player must accept the conditions he encounters during play and may not alter them to suit his convenience . . . One of the great features of golf is that it tests the player's ability to execute a great assortment of strokes under a perplexing variety of conditions. Golf would cease to be a game of skill if the player were



Richard S. Tufts

permitted to get the best of the conditions which confront him through their elimination rather than to overcome them by the expert execution of his stroke.

"Golf, like life, is full of breaks . . . , one of its fascinations being in 'the way the ball bounces.' To be able to accept the breaks and still go on playing your game has always been one of the tests of the true champion."

The second "great principle" is that "You put your ball in play at the start of the hole, play only your ball and do not touch it until you lift it from the hole."

Mr. Tufts lists ten "working principles" of Rules-making, which include:

"In match play, only you and your opponent are involved, but in stroke play every competitor in the field has an interest in the results of your play."

"The penalty must not be less than the advantage which the player could derive from the particular Rule violation."

"Except for advice from those on his side, the player must play his own game."

"The Rules should not attempt to cope with the exceptional."

Copies may be purchased for \$2 from Richard S. Tufts, Pinehurst, N. C.