



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. "60-1" means the first decision issued in 1960. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1960 Rules of Golf.

BALL MOVED: COMING TO REST OUT OF BOUNDS

USGA 60-13
D. 21, R. 27-1d, 29-1

Q: In stroke play, a competitor's ball is lying on a steep slope near the course boundary. As he addresses the ball, he accidentally moves it, and due to the steep slope the ball rolls out of bounds.

What is the correct procedure in such a case, and what, if any, penalties does the competitor incur?

A: Rule 27-1d provides that a ball moved accidentally by the player after he addresses it "shall be played as it lies" after a penalty of one stroke. If a ball so moved rolls out of bounds, it is on ground on which play is prohibited (Definition 21) and the player's only recourse is to accept a one-stroke penalty under Rule 27-1d and proceed under Rule 29-1 for a ball out of bounds.

It is not necessary that a ball out of bounds shall have been sent there by a stroke in order to proceed under Rule 29-1. The Rule provides: "He shall play his next stroke as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played or moved by him."

LOOSE IMPEDIMENTS: "SOLIDLY EMBEDDED" DEFINED

USGA 60-12
D. 17, R. 18-1, 31-2, 37-7

Q1: Definition 17—What is the exact meaning of "and includes stones not solidly embedded?" Some say that a stone partially embedded may not be moved regardless of how small it may be or how easily it might be picked up. How about stones the size of watermelons which clearly rest on top of the ground, but can only be moved with much effort. May they be moved?

A1: The words "solidly embedded" should be taken literally. If a stone is only partially embedded and may be picked up with ease, it is a loose impediment. Where there is doubt as to whether a stone is solidly embedded, to avoid questions being raised we recommend that it not be removed unless a ruling is obtained. The size of a stone is of no consequence. Under Rule 18-1, the player may remove stones (not solidly embedded) of any size, provided he has regard for Rule 37-7 concerning undue delay in play.

**OBSTRUCTIONS:
NO RELIEF IF STROKE
UNNECESSARILY ABNORMAL**

Q2: Rule 31-2—May a referee or a committee determine whether an artificial obstruction interferes with a stroke? For example, a player's ball was 38 inches from a water pipe which was exposed about three inches above the ground. The player demonstrated with a weird and highly unorthodox follow-through that he could hit the pipe. The referee would not allow the player any relief because he felt the player wanted relief from a tree and a large stone which interfered with the flight of the ball. The player contended that the referee had no right to question the manner in which he intended to swing. Who was correct?

A2: The purpose of Rule 31-2 is to provide relief if immovable artificial objects interfere with the stance, backswing, or stroke in the direction in which the player desires to play.

It is a question of fact whether interference exists. In event of a question, the Committee (or referee if there is one) must decide. Their decision is final. See Rules 11-2 and 11-3.

In the case you cite, it would appear that the player could claim interference only through employment of an unnecessarily abnormal stroke. He was therefore not entitled to relief.

Relief is not provided for interference with the flight of the ball.

Questions by: **ROBERT H. ELLIOTT**
Manchester, N. H.

**BALL ON LIP OF HOLE:
KNOCKED INTO CUP BY BLOWING
TUMBLEWEED**

USGA 60-17
D. 22, R. 27-1a

Q: A player's ball is at rest an inch or so from the cup. A tumbleweed blowing across the course strikes the ball and knocks it into the cup. Is the player deemed to have holed out with his last stroke or should the ball be replaced?

Question by: **WM. L. OLIVER**
Roswell, N. M.

A: Rule 27-1a applies and the ball must be replaced without penalty. A tumbleweed is an outside agency—see Definition 22.

**FLAGSTICK:
MAY BE TAPERED OR OF VARYING
DIAMETERS**

USGA 60-15
D. 12

Q: Does Definition 12 prohibit the use of tapered flagsticks or the metal "hole in one" ferrule which has been used at many courses?

Question by: **MORGAN BOGGS**
Fort Knox, Ky.

A: Definition 12 provides in part: "It (the flagstick) shall be circular in cross-section." This does not prohibit such flagsticks which contain sections of varying diameters.

A purpose of the Definition is to prohibit non-circular features in the lower part of the flagstick which could stop a ball.

**BALL LOST: WHEN FIVE MINUTE
SEARCH NOT REQUIRED**

USGA 60-16
D. 6, R. 4, 29-1b

Q: If a player is searching for his ball, may his opponent concede the loss of the ball before a five minute search has been made, or will this action make both players liable for disqualification under Rule 4?

Question by: **LEON KAPLAN**
Waltham, Mass.

A: Rule 29-1b provides: "In order for the player to treat a ball as lost . . . there must be reasonable evidence to that effect or a search of five minutes must be made." Reasonable evidence is a question of fact to be determined from the results of actual search, opinions of individuals present and other relevant circumstances.

In match play, a player's bona fide claim of a ball lost, when conceded by his opponent, may itself constitute such reasonable evidence.

In stroke play, similar weight should not be accorded an agreement between a competitor and a fellow-competitor because of the interests of other competitors which may be involved, and a five-minute search may be necessary to establish conclusively the loss of a ball.

In either case, the players should not be subject to disqualification under Rule 4 by reason of their agreement, unless the agreement is flagrantly contrary to fact.

**LOCAL RULE: PRACTICING ON
COURSE BEFORE STROKE PLAY**

USGA 60-14

R. 8-3, 11-3, 36-4b, L. R.

Q: Three players started playing a practice round during the week of qualifying for a match play tournament. After playing five holes, they noted the fine condition of the course and decided to qualify. They returned to the clubhouse, declared their intention to qualify, and teed off on the first tee.

The tournament rules for qualifying stated: "Qualifying round will be played in two-, three-, or four-ball (groups) between February 22 and 28. The course is open for practice during this time, but a player must declare his intentions for qualifying and sign up at the clubhouse before playing."

I contend they were in violation of Rule 8-3 for practicing during the day of qualifying. The Committee stated that, as the course was open for practice, they had not violated any rule as the course was the practice area. What is your ruling?

Question by: **NORMAN J. LEWTER**
Balboa, Canal Zone

A: The Committee's decision was final—see Rule 11-3. The Committee knew the intention of its Local Rule and must interpret it.

The Local Rule apparently took precedence over Rule 8-3 as it permitted practice on the course during the time of qualifying. It would have been better if the Local Rule had stipulated whether or not players could practice on the day on which they chose to qualify.

It is generally inadvisable to permit practice on the course, especially from any hazard or on any putting green, on the day of a stroke competition. See Rule 36-4b.

**DROPPED BALL: ABANDONING
BEFORE PLAYING**

USGA 60-18

D. 6, R. 21, 22-4, 29-1, 35-1c

Q.1: Rule 22: It very often happens that after searching for his ball awhile, player returns to his original spot, drops another ball (under Rule 29-1 for a lost ball) and addresses it, and before the lapse of five minutes his original ball is found.

Can he abandon his dropped ball under

new Rule 22-4 before his play, or if he addresses his ball is it too late to abandon?

A.1: As the original ball was not lost (Definition 6), Rule 29-1 was not applicable, and the player was entitled to abandon the dropped ball as provided for in Rule 22-4b.

**DAMAGE TO PUTTING GREEN:
FILLING WITH SAND PROHIBITED**

Q.2: Rule 35-1c: In Japan, each caddie generally carries a small sand bag to fill up any divot "through the green," primarily for the reason that Japanese bermuda grass, after play, falls into pieces and on most occasions divots cannot be replaced because they are broken up, so caddies fill up such divots with sand.

On the putting green, new Rule 35-1c permits players to repair any damage caused through the impact of a ball, from which I deduce that the damage must be limited strictly to the impact of the ball. As the method of repairing is not mentioned except to bar stepping thereon, am I to understand that such a pitch mark on the green can be filled with sand before play?

A.2: No. Repair of damage under Rule 35-1c means restoration of the damaged turf to something approximating its original condition, without introduction of additional materials. From a course maintenance point of view, it is advisable to loosen ball impressions on the green to avoid soil compaction.

**BALL LOST: TIME PERMITTED
FOR SEARCH**

Q.3: Definition 6, "Ball Lost," provides in part: "Time spent in playing a wrong ball is not counted in the five-minute period allowed for search." If the player found the ball in three minutes after search began, and it was found to be a wrong ball after its play, is the player (after penalty under Rule 21) entitled to search for his own ball for another five minutes afresh, not counting three minutes already spent for search?

A.3: No. Definition 6 does not permit more than a five-minute search. The five-minute period excludes time spent in playing a wrong ball but not in searching.

Questions by: **S. TAKAHATA**, President
Hirono Golf Club
Kobe, Japan

WATER HAZARD: STATUS OF BALL LOST WITHIN

USGA 60-19

D. 32, R. 29-1, 29-2a, 33-2, Note to 33

Q. Our second hole is approximately 165 yards long with a reservoir between the tee and the green. The reservoir runs from the base of the tee approximately 140 yards to a bank in front of the green. There is no fairway at all between the tee and the reservoir. Therefore, if you hit into the water there is no place on which to drop back. Because of this, it is necessary to hit a second shot from the tee if the original ball goes into the water.

Faction A contends that a ball in the hazard is unplayable and is not a lost ball, and that a second tee shot is the third stroke. Faction B contends that a ball in the water is lost, and that under the new Rule a second tee shot is the second stroke.

Which faction is correct?

Question by: **LT. REYNOLD J. MATTHEWS**
Arlington, Virginia

A: Faction A, in a sense, is correct. However, Rule 33-2 must be applied for relief for a ball which is lost in a water hazard. Rule 29 for a ball lost or unplayable does not apply—see last note to that Rule. If a tee shot is lost within the confines of the water hazard (reservoir), the player may, under Rule 33-2b, tee another ball within the teeing ground (Definition 32). Alternatively, he may drop a ball any distance behind the water hazard provided he keep the spot at which the ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard between himself and the hole—Rule 33-2a. In either case, the player would then be playing his third stroke.

HANDICAP DECISION

NO HANDICAPPING IN CLOSED SEASON

USGA Handicap Decision 60-2

References: Men: Sections 4-1 and 13

Women: Section 14-1 and 22

Q: We seek advice on the matter of an open or closed golf season for the Women's Division of the Virginia State Golf Association.

We have about 55 clubs which are active members of the VSGA. About 10 are located in the Tidewater area; about 10 in the Richmond area; about 10 in the

southwestern area (Roanoke-Lynchburg) and the other clubs in the northern and northwestern areas. The clubs in the Tidewater and the southwestern areas contend that they can play golf all winter since they apparently have much milder weather than in the northern areas. The clubs in the northern (Arlington) and the northwestern areas can play very little due to the frozen condition of the ground, etc.

In the past the VSGA has not been accepting scores from November 1-April 1 for handicap purposes. We have felt that the scores submitted during this period did not present a true picture of one's game and/or handicap.

At a recent general meeting of the VSGA a vote favored a closed season. However, many clubs still want an open season and have asked me to write to you.

Question by: **MRS. ELIZABETH HANNA**
Arlington, Va.

A: The USGA recognizes that in certain areas golf is not a twelve-months pleasure, as our handicap system specifically mentions "playing seasons" (when the game is seasonal) and "calendar years" (when golf is year-round).

Section 14-1 of The Conduct of Women's Golf indicates that scores to be acceptable should be made under the spirit of the Rules of Golf, and Section 22 indicates the conditions when scores made under "preferred lies" or "winter rules" are acceptable. Therefore, if, during a certain season, the spirit of the Rules of Golf cannot be lived up to, or course management cannot maintain a course's normal scoring difficulty when "winter rules" are in effect, there should be "closed" seasons during which scores will not be accepted for handicap purposes.

The length of an inactive season might have to rest with the club, rather than the district association, as in a single area one club might be playable while another club nearby might not be. However, it would be best to have groups of clubs within narrow areas make the decision for themselves, even though this meant some clubs in, say, Virginia are "open" and others "closed." Also, it might be well for the Women's Division to come to an agreement with the Men's Division on uniform procedure.