

DUTIES OF OFFICIALS UNDER THE RULES OF GOLF

A guide for
referees and
Committee members

Unlike many sports, golf is seldom played with referees. Consequently, the opportunity for officiating in that capacity is limited, and few golfers are fully qualified to serve as referees. This outline has been written with the hope of assisting those who may be called upon to officiate.

Since the principal duty of a referee is to determine questions both of fact and of golfing law (Definition 26), the manner in which he performs his duties can have a substantial effect on the results of a match. It is not sufficient that he render a correct decision when appealed to; he must also, at all times, be sufficiently alert to observe accurately and to interpret correctly all the events which may occur during a round. Golf being a perverse game, the careless referee can be certain that that moment when his attention is relaxed will be the same moment when some difficulty will arise.

Further, there is the delicate little matter of the manner in which a referee performs his duties to observe and to interpret. Golf is sometimes played under considerable nervous tension, and maintenance of a proper degree of concentration is important. Brusque or officious handling of a situation can, by upsetting a player, magnify the effect of a penalty far beyond the penalty itself. It is important to sense when to talk to a player and when to be silent.

Obviously, a referee must understand thoroughly what he is doing. He is assigned to a match for the purpose of helping to ensure that it will be fairly played under sporting conditions.

Let us start on the first tee and consider problems that may confront a referee during match play. (The special problems of refereeing in stroke play will be considered later.)

Before Play Starts

The procedure of a referee before a match will depend a great deal on the

experience of the players. If both are seasoned veterans who have often played before large galleries and in matches with referees, it is usually sufficient to ask each player to identify the ball he will be using and whether he has counted his clubs; the referee should note the brand of ball of each player. If the players are inexperienced, it is well to remind them of the duties of a referee, principally that he has not been assigned just to call penalties but rather to be of assistance to the players, and that they should call on him whenever they may be doubtful as to the correct procedure. When players are not accustomed to playing before a gallery, especially a large gallery, it is well to ask them to call upon the referee whenever the actions of the gallery may disturb them.

Identification of the player's ball can become very important and the referee should not depend wholly upon the player to decide this question of fact. There should be no chance for confusion either between the balls in the match or with a ball outside the match. One of the most important times to guard against confusion is when a player puts a second ball in play under the Rules: the referee should always ask whether the player will be able to identify the two balls. There should be no difficulty in obtaining the cooperation of players since a ball which a player is unable to identify becomes a lost ball (Definition 6).

The Observer

Another matter requiring the referee's attention before a match is to reach an understanding with his observer (Definition 19), if one has been appointed. Usually it is best for the observer to work ahead of the match as much as possible. The referee should stay close to the players at all times: he should be readily available to answer questions and to check on such matters as the purpose for which a second ball may be played.

By stationing himself usually in the

area where the ball may be expected to come to rest, an observer will be in a position to determine important questions of fact which the referee, from his position near the players, could not hope to decide. For example, it is always useful to know before going forward whether a player's ball is out of bounds or in a water hazard. Only an official can properly determine such facts. (On a close question of out of bounds, it can be helpful to stretch a tape measure, string or gallery rope between posts or stakes, on their inside faces near the ground.) There is the very important question of knowing whether a ball was still in motion when deflected by some such outside agency as a spectator (Rule 26-1a) or whether it had come to rest and was moved by an outside agency (Rule 27-1a). If it was moved when at rest, there is the further question of knowing the spot from which it was moved.

Since the play of each ball should be observed, when both players are in difficulty on opposite sides of the hole it is desirable for the observer to station himself by one of the balls if possible. Preferably, he should watch the ball to be played first, so that he may have opportunity to resume his normal position ahead of the play.

When there is a large gallery, there are other duties which an observer can perform by placing himself ahead of the play. To help ensure fair play, it is a duty of a referee to guard against any possible interference by spectators. Such interference occurs most frequently around the putting green. An observer can be of great assistance by moving spectators away from places where a ball may go, asking spectators to stand up and be alert before shots are played to the green, and in guarding a ball which may have gone into the gallery. Very often an observer is in a better position than the referee to work with the marshals to obtain proper control of the gallery.

In an important match, the services of an alert observer are indispensable to the referee.

On the Tee

When play starts and on each tee thereafter, the referee should station himself in a position to determine whether players have teed within the

limits of the teeing ground. Should an opponent require the player to replay, and the claim be disputed, it would create a difficult situation for the referee if he did not know whether the ball had been properly teed. Although a referee cannot initially instruct a player to play from within the limits of the teeing ground, there is no reason for him to watch a player tee and play his ball from outside the limits without giving him some such warning as "Your ball is a little ahead of the markers."

This brings up the question of the referee's ethical position when he sees a player about to commit an infraction of the Rules. As has been said, a referee is assigned to a match for the purpose of ensuring that it will be fairly played under sporting conditions. The referee does not have the authority to prevent a willful violation of the Rules. But he certainly does have both the right and the obligation to advise the players with respect to the Rules. To be sure, ignorance of the Rules is no excuse, and it may be argued that the player who does not know the Rules should be penalized; but it would be contrary to the spirit of fair play which pervades golf should a referee fail to inform a player of his rights and obligations under the Rules, and then to call a penalty for a violation he could have prevented. The referee who tries to help players avoid infractions cannot be accused of favoring one player as against the other since he is still performing his duties impartially.

The following are a few of many examples of situations and the suggested procedure to which this policy might be applied:

- (a) Lifting a loose impediment in a hazard: The referee should advise the player that his ball is in a hazard.
- (b) Improper dropping procedure: The referee should call attention to what the player is doing wrong.
- (c) Play of a second ball without stating the purpose: The referee should ask whether it is the player's intention to play the ball provisionally.
- (d) Incorrect order of play in four-somes: The referee should ask whether the player is playing in correct order.



A tape helps former USGA officials Charles B. Grace (left) and Isaac B. Grainger.

One final suggestion for tee procedure. If the gallery is out of position ahead of play or if there is noise or movement which might disturb the players, the referee should stand between the player's ball and the hole. This will serve to stop play until satisfactory conditions have been restored and will place the referee in a good position to command the attention of the marshals and galleries for the purpose of giving them any necessary instructions. (On the putting green, if it is not practical for the referee to take such a position, he should speak first to the player who is about to play, warning him of his intention to speak to the gallery.) Generally speaking, it is a duty of the referee to help prevent any interference with play by the gallery, and he should not hesitate to stop play and address the gallery whenever they are disturbing the players or in the event of an exhibition of undue partiality.

Who Is Away?

Play having left the tee, the referee should proceed to a position between the two balls, arriving there ahead of the players in order to save time by deciding which ball is away before they are ready to play. There are many methods of deciding which ball is away: One of

the simplest is to approach the two balls on a line to the hole midway between both balls. If there still is any doubt and the referee is equipped with a shooting stick or an umbrella, he should stand between the balls and hold the stick or umbrella perpendicular to the line to the hole, and the direction in which the implement points will usually indicate that one ball is ahead of the other.

Around the putting green, the order of play can be of great interest to the players. Again, to avoid delay, the referee should arrive at the green ahead of the players, and if there is any doubt he should proceed at once to the hole to see who is away. If the matter cannot be determined visually, the distance to each ball should be paced off. To resolve any further doubt, the referee should be equipped with a 50-foot tape for accurate measurement. For short distances the flagstick may be used but there is less danger of doing damage to the putting surface by the use of a tape. In any case, measurement should, if possible, be made just to one side of the line of the player's putt.

Whenever it is impractical to decide which ball is away anywhere on the course, the matter should be determined by the tossing of a coin.

In Position To See Ball Played

After the tee shot, one of the very important questions of fact that can arise to confront a referee is whether a ball has been moved by the player. To determine this, the referee (or his observer) should always be in a position to obtain a clear view of the ball, before and after address. Golf being the kind of game it is, a referee is not likely to have occasion to call a penalty, but he may very well have opportunity of protecting the player by determining that his ball had merely oscillated and returned to its original position. In such a case, the referee will have served the interests of fair play by his alertness.

Improving the Lie

The application of Rule 17 always presents a difficult problem for the referee. If a player has improved his lie by smoothing out irregularities, as in sandy soil, or by moving anything such as grass, the referee has no choice and must call a penalty. It should be noted that many of the prohibitions in Rule 17 apply not only before address but also during the address and the backward movement of the club for the stroke, which is not a part of the stroke itself (Definition 30). Thus, the scraping away of sand as the club is moved back for the stroke can constitute a violation.

Occasionally a player may be careless in his observance of this Rule. If there has been no actual violation, the wise referee will caution the player and so minimize the possibility of having to call an infraction later. The referee can accomplish this by pointing out to the player that although no violation has occurred, he wants to assure himself that the player is familiar with the Rule. There are other situations in which the referee may not wish or may not have opportunity to caution a player during play but, as a matter of protection, he may wish to do so later. Obviously, this procedure can be followed only when it is the judgment of the referee that no infraction has taken place.

Rule 17-3 can create another headache for the referee when the ball has found its way into bushes or small trees. Here the referee must determine how much the player may disturb the interfering growth in the process of fairly taking his stance to play the stroke. Generally

speaking, the referee can be guided by the principle that anything occupying the space in which the player wishes to stand may be moved to one side but not stepped upon or moved more than necessary for the player to take his position. The referee will, of course, watch the player and guide him in his actions.

In A Bunker

Another unhappy moment for the referee occurs when he must decide whether a player has touched the surface of the ground in playing from a bunker. It is difficult to inflict a penalty when the contact with the soil has been so slight that the player could not have gained any advantage. However, Rule 33-1 is specific in stating that the ground must not be touched. If the referee observes a few grains of sand fall from the top of a sandy ridge in the bunker, he may assume that it was caused by the motion of the air and not the club; but if the backward movement of the club leaves any mark upon the ground, it must be clear that a violation has occurred.

On the Putting Green

On reaching the putting green, the referee should select a position from which he can watch the play without interference to the gallery. Though the referee's presence on the putting green is essential, the gallery does not always appreciate this fact and resents his being in the way.

More decisions are apt to be required on the putting green than on other parts of the course. If a ball has been displaced, the referee should locate the spot from which it has been moved. When a ball is lifted for interference with play, the referee should assure himself that it is correctly replaced. A possible difficulty here is the player's failure to measure over from a mark placed to one side of the location of the ball. When a ball mark is repaired by a player, the referee should be sure that it is a ball mark and that the repair does not extend beyond the damage made by the impact. The referee must watch to see that players do not touch the line of their putt except for the removal of loose impediments or to repair ball marks. When a ball stops on the lip of the cup, the referee may have to decide, first, whether it has come to rest, and second,

what constitutes a momentary delay before the players are called upon to resume play.

One especially difficult situation on the putting green relates to the concession of putts. Important matches have been lost when a player, after missing a putt for a win, removes his ball from near the hole without holing out and without concession by the opponent. In such a case the referee should make certain whether the putt has been conceded or not. Unfortunately, players seem to enter into a conspiracy to maintain secrecy on this matter of concession. But it is a point which the referee cannot ignore. If he is certain that a putt has not been conceded, rather than calling a penalty at once the referee can bring the matter to the attention of both players by asking the opponent if it had been his intention to concede the putt.

Handling Awkward Situations

Sooner or later every referee is certain to be faced with an awkward situation. Aside from the use of tact and good judgment, there is no formula which he can follow. However, a few suggestions may be helpful.

In the first place, be firm and positive but take plenty of time. It is always well to consult your Rule book. A referee without pants is better equipped than a referee without a Rule book. Even if you are certain of the Rule, it will help to let the players read it. Frequently in reaching a decision, the intention of the player can be of first importance. Before any discussion can develop, the first order of business often should be the determination of this fact. To inquire about the player's intention can be very useful as a routine approach to any questionable action, as, for example, if the player should appear to test the depth of sand in a bunker or to touch the line of his putt when there are no visible loose impediments to be removed.

Finally, there are the difficult questions of fact raised by casual water and interference by an obstruction. To be deemed casual water, a temporary accumulation of water must be visible on the surface of the ground, or at least there must be enough water present to cover the thickness of the sole of a shoe under normal pressure of the player's weight. As for interference by an ob-

struction, the interference must be physical for the player to invoke the Rule. The Rule is not intended to cover mental interference or interference established by wild contortions.

Stroke Play

With two important exceptions, the procedure which a referee should follow for stroke play is very little different from that for match play. He should work with his observer, follow play, and call penalties with the same alertness as for match play. He is equally interested to ensure that the part of the competition for which he is responsible is fairly played under sporting conditions. He should feel no reluctance to call penalties even though other competitors without referees may not be subjected to the same critical examinations as those in the group for whom the referee is responsible. All those in contention for the championship probably will be playing with referees assigned to their groups.

The first adjustment which a referee must make in covering stroke play concerns the difference in the Rules for match and stroke play. If a referee does not know the Rules well enough to be familiar with these differences, he should not be assigned to officiate. Therefore, there is no need to do more than mention a few of these differences: a stroke must be recalled if the ball is not played from within the teeing ground; determination of the order of play becomes less important; concession of putts is eliminated, and the play of every hole must be completed; etc.

The second important point of difference in stroke play as compared with match play is that the referee is not burdened with an absolute necessity of reaching all decisions on the course. By having the player take advantage of the right in stroke play to complete the play of a hole with two balls (Rule 11-5), the referee is in a position to pass the burden of making a sticky decision to the Committee in charge of the competition. It is for this reason that the Rules give the Committee the right to limit a referee's duties in stroke play (Definition 26). The Committee may even wish to go further and to retain for itself the right to make all decisions. This might be done if the Committee questions a referee's knowledge of the Rules, or if inability

to provide referees for all leading competitors may raise the issue of inequality of supervision, or when the principal reason for having a referee may be to expedite play and handle galleries. In such instances the duties of a referee may be limited to the determination of facts; his procedure with respect to infractions of the Rules is restricted to calling them to the attention of the competitor. Any further limitation of the duties of a referee would be tantamount to the elimination of his position as a referee.

One final word of caution to referees. When in charge of a play-off for positions in a qualifying round, a referee should not overlook the fact that it is conducted under stroke play Rules, even if only two competitors are involved.

The Committee

Since the referee's authority stems from the Committee in charge of competition, it is well to examine also the responsibility of the Committee members as individuals. Their functions as a group have already been fairly well outlined in the references made to their authority, but when they are not referees their duties and obligations while observing play or on station assignments on the course are another matter.

In the first place, it should be clearly understood that a Committee member is in no sense a referee (unless specifically so designated). When he is present on the course, either by chance or assignment, he is only a representative of the Committee. As such he has definite obligations, but they will vary greatly between match play and stroke play competition.

In match play without a referee, involvement in the outcome of any particular match is entirely restricted to those playing in it; and since the players involved are present to protect their interests, there is no reason for a Committee member to take any cognizance of Rules infractions which he may observe. His presence on the course is for the sole purpose of being of assistance to the players in the event of a claim (Rule 11-1a and Rule 11-3). When a claim has been presented to a member of the Committee on the course, his handling of the situation will depend upon the authority granted him by the Committee and upon

the exercise of his own judgment. A Committee may wish to grant the individual members unlimited authority to represent the Committee by making final decisions, or it may wish to limit this authority. This is an issue on which a clear decision must be made. However, regardless of the authority extended to individual members of the Committee, when in doubt they may wish to obtain action from the full Committee. Such action must be arranged for immediately unless the players involved are willing to continue with their match subject to a later decision. However, deferring a decision should be resorted to only under extraordinary circumstances, since it is a principle of match play that each side is entitled to know the status of the match at all times.

In a stroke play competition, the position of a Committee representative on the course is wholly different. Now every competitor has direct interest in the play of all other competitors. Since only those competitors playing in a given group can represent the interests of the absent competitors, it becomes the obligation of every Committee member also to represent the interests of the remainder of the field. Thus, the Committee member must act on any probable violation of the Rules which he may observe. This may be accomplished by immediately questioning the competitor about his procedure. Also, the Committee representative on the course will be called upon to make decisions and they should be handled as for match play, except that the need for immediate decision is less urgent.

The Spirit of Officiating

Participants in an event are keenly conscious of the spirit in which it is conducted. There is no more certain way to injure the reputation of a tournament than by lax management. It may be difficult and unpleasant to be punctilious in enforcement of Rules, but it is a rare golfer who does not prefer to compete in a well-run event. Players are quick to recognize the official who makes use of his position to watch the play better or to inflate his own sense of importance. Authority should be exercised for the sole purpose of helping to ensure that an event will be fairly played under sporting conditions.

EQUIPMENT FOR A REFEREE

Rules of Golf booklet.
Score card.
Local Rules, if any.
Pencil.
Tape measure or string.
Watch.

CHECK LIST OF SOME DUTIES OF A REFEREE

(a) **Introductory:**

Read Definition 26.
Read Rule 11.

(b) **No. 1 Tee:**

Instruct observer.
Identify players' balls.
Ask players whether they have counted clubs (Rule 3).
Tell players of main duties of referee and observer.

(c) **Teeing Ground:**

Be in position to see balls teed (Definition 32).

(d) **General:**

Stay close to players at all times (but do not chatter).

Determine who is away before players arrive (Rules 20 and 35-2b).

Prevent spectator interference; if necessary, stop play and tell players what is being done.

Try to help players avoid infractions by calling attention to Rules which they may be about to breach.

Do not handle ball or flagstick (except in measuring). (Definition 26).

Rulings: (1) Determine facts clearly.

(2) Try to determine player's intent.

(3) Let players read Rule.

Be in position to see each player address and play ball.

Did ball move after address? (Rule 27-1d)

Did player strike ball twice during stroke? (Rule 19-2)

Second ball: Why was it played? (Rules 11-5, 30)

Was ball affected by outside agency when:

(1) In motion (Rule 26-1a).

(2) At rest (Rule 27-1a).

Immovable obstructions (Rule 31-2):

(1) Is there physical interference?

(2) What is nearest point on outside of obstructions?

Is a ball unfit for play? (Rule 28)

Casual water: Does it fit Definition 8?

(Rule 32)

Location of ball: Is it—

(1) Within confines of a hazard? (Definition 14, Rule 33)

(2) In ground under repair? (Definition 13, Rule 32)

(3) Out of bounds? (Definition 21, Rule 29)

Out of Bounds: When in doubt, stretch tape measure, string or gallery rope between posts or stakes, on their inside faces, near the ground. (Definition 21)

Hazard:

(1) Advise player when ball is in hazard if there can be any question.

(2) Was a loose impediment touched or moved? (Rule 33-1)

(3) Did club touch ground before downswing? (Rule 33-1)

Through the green: Did player improve lie by:

(1) Smoothing irregularities (Rule 17-1)

(2) Moving grass (Rule 17-2, 17-3)

(3) Improperly moving bush or small tree (Rule 17-3)

Putting green:

Ball striking ball—note position of ball moved. (Rules 35-2c, 35-3c)

Ball lifted—ensure replacement in right place (Rule 22-3)

Line of putt: Was it touched except to remove loose impediment or to repair ball mark? (Rule 35-1a)

Ball on lip of hole: Is it at rest? (Rule 35-1h)

Match play: Was putt conceded? (Rule 35-2d)

(e) **Stroke Play:**

Are referee's duties limited? If so, how?

Qualifying play-off: It is at stroke play.

(f) **Foursome:**

Warn about incorrect order of play, in advance (Rule 15)

Penalty stroke does not affect rotation of play (Rule 24)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ON COURSE

(a) **Match Play:** Do not intervene, even if infractions are observed.

(b) **Stroke Play:**

Take cognizance of any infraction, and notify player and marker.

Try to help players avoid infractions by calling attention to Rules which they may be about to breach.