



# 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. "61-1" means the first decision issued in 1961. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1961 Rules of Golf.

**PENALTY: NEVER MODIFIED FOR  
FAILURE TO HOLE OUT IN  
STROKE PLAY  
MARKER: NOT PENALIZED IF WRONG  
SCORE RETURNED BY COMPETITOR**

USGA 60-50

D. 18, R. 1, 11-3, 23-3, 36-5, 38-2

**Q:** In a stroke play competition, the competitor failed to hole out on the sixteenth hole with her fifth stroke. In anger, she putted the ball off the green, picked it up, and teed off on the next hole. Her scorer recorded a six for her at the sixteenth. When the round was completed, her card was attested by the scorer and she returned it to the Tournament Chairman.

At this point I called the error (quoting Rules 23 and 38) to the attention of the Tournament Chairman.

The competitor admitted her error, and stated that she felt she should be disqualified. She said further, however, that she was of the opinion that the members of her foursome were most unsportsmanlike in not calling the error to her attention on the sixteenth green so that she might have had opportunity to complete the hole.

The majority of the club voted, in view

of the unsportsmanlike act on the part of the fellow-competitors, to modify, in accordance with equity, the penalty of disqualification in favor of a two-stroke penalty for the player and the scorer.

I would be appreciative if you would advise me of how you would have ruled in this case.

Question by: Mrs. D. E. MOUNTTOURE  
San Leandro, Calif.

**A:** We disagree with the Committee's ruling; however, under Rule 11-3, its decision is final.

In failing to hole out on Hole 16, the competitor, in addition to violating Rule 23-3, violated Rule 1—the basic rule of golf—the penalty for which is disqualification.

Rule 36-5 empowers the Committee to waive or to modify a penalty of disqualification "in exceptional individual cases." However, Rule 36-5 should never be invoked in the case of disqualification for failure to hole out on a hole in stroke play; the competitor in such a case has not played the course.

Failure of fellow-competitors to advise the competitor that she had failed to hole out before she left the sixteenth green does not constitute a "good reason" for modifying a penalty. It is the duty of the

competitor to acquaint herself with the Rules.

We note that the Committee assessed a penalty (presumably under Rule 38-2) against the competitor's marker (scorer). This was wrong as Rule 38-2 provides in part: "The competitor is solely responsible for the correctness of the score recorded for each hole." Under Definition 18 a marker does not have to be a fellow-competitor.

#### **CLUB PLACED ALONG LINE OF PLAY TO AID STANCE: CONSTITUTES INDICATING LINE OF PLAY**

USGA 61-36

R. 9-2

**Q:** A player habitually uses a golf club to guide him in lining up his tee and fairway shots. He does this by placing the club down with the grip facing the direction to which he intends to hit. He then assumes his stance and proceeds to hit the ball. He claims he uses the club only to position his feet and not to indicate direction. Is this a violation of the Rules?

Question by: CARMEN CEO  
Seneca Falls, N. Y.

**A:** Yes. The player's act violates Rule 9-2 which prohibits placing a mark to indicate the line of play.

The player's claim that he uses the club only to position his feet and not to indicate direction is not valid as an aid in placement of the feet for the stance would also directly indicate the desired line of play.

#### **ADDRESSING THE BALL IN BUNKER**

USGA 61-40

D. 1, R. 27-1c, 27-1d

**Q:** A ball hit into a bunker was barely hanging on a steep slope in such a precarious position that one could not tell what kept it from rolling. The player approached the ball and was in the act of spreading his feet near the ball for, but had not yet completed, his stance when the ball moved. Under Rule 27-1d, did the player then incur a penalty stroke or was he allowed to first "dig in" for a solid footing before the moving of the ball would have caused him to incur a penalty stroke?

Question by: JACK WALDRON  
Bethesda, Md.

**A:** Since the ball moved before the player had addressed it, the player did not incur a penalty stroke under Rule

27-1d. Under Definition 1, in a hazard a player has addressed the ball when he has taken his stance preparatory to making a stroke. Whether the stance has been so taken is a question of fact to be determined in the light of the circumstances of each case. In a bunker, some "digging in" normally would be expected to precede the completion of the stance.

It should be noted, however, that if the player's approach to the ball or the spreading of his feet for his stance in fact caused the ball to move, the player would incur a penalty stroke for accidentally moving the ball under Rule 27-1c.

#### **WRONG INFORMATION IN STROKE PLAY DEFINED. FAILURE TO INCLUDE PENALTY IN SCORE**

Revised USGA 61-10

R. 11-1b, 11-4, 36-5, 38-3

(Answer 1 in original Decision 61-10, dated Feb. 23, 1961, is hereby cancelled)

**Q.1:** Please explain the meaning of the term "wrong information" in Rule 11-1b with regard to a player's failure to include a penalty in his score.

**A.1:** Rule 11-1b is a statute of limitations. It prevents the imposition of penalties after the close of a stroke play competition and thereby serves the important purpose of barring late claims. The only exception is for "wrong information."

Whenever a claim is raised after the close of a stroke play competition, the Committee must decide whether the Rule or the exception applies. The answer will depend largely upon the circumstances of the particular case and the equities as they appear to the Committee. So varied can these be that it would not be feasible or wise to lay down categorically all the precise rules of construction. It might be said in passing, however, that the difficulties inherent in arranging, long after the event, for the revision of the results of the competition, the place winners and the distribution of prizes, as well as the need to discourage late assertion of possibly immaterial claims, should induce Committees to resolve doubts in favor of applying the Rule rather than the exception.

Similar considerations make it clear that "wrong information" was not intended and should not be interpreted, to

mean any omission of a penalty from a score in stroke play. On the other hand, the term should be interpreted to mean any such omission which the Committee finds to have been willful or even conscious. In the area between, it must be left that the Committee should decide the matter in the light of all the relevant circumstances, including its own findings as to whether or not the player knew of the Rules infraction. If it is found that he did, then, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, he would be presumed to have omitted the penalty consciously and the exception would become operative.

### **PENALTY, STROKE PLAY: APPLIED BELATEDLY IF WRONG INFORMATION GIVEN**

**Q.2:** It was found that the scorecard of a player in the qualifying round of a match play tournament did not include a penalty on a certain hole through wrong information which he had given. This player had advanced in match play before the fact was discovered. In such a case, is the player still subject to disqualification under Rule 11-1b?

**A.2:** Yes, and under Rule 38-3 the penalty of disqualification should be applied unless waived by the Committee in conformity with Rule 36-5.

### **MATCH PLAY: EFFECT OF BELATED DISQUALIFICATION ON TOURNAMENT**

**Q.3:** If your answer to Question 2 is affirmative and the Committee disqualifies a player who has advanced in match play, what then should the Committee do to be fair to the players beaten by the disqualified player?

**A.3:** The Committee must determine further procedure in equity (Rule 11-4). For example, the Committee might either: (a) call off the competition; (b) reinstate the player last eliminated by the player who gave wrong information, although that would be unfair to the other players eliminated by him; (c) require all players eliminated by him to play off for his forfeited position; or (d) consider the penalty applicable only from the time of its discovery by the Committee, thus giving his next opponent a default.

S. TAKAHATA, Hirono Golf Club, Japan

### **OBSTRUCTION: DETERMINING NEAREST OUTSIDE POINT IS NOT "MEASURING THROUGH"**

USGA 61-33

R. 31-2

**Q:** How would a player obtain relief from a barn in the following situation?:

The ball enters the barn through a side door near the front, strikes the inside of the front wall, rebounds backward, and comes to rest against the rear wall, still inside the barn.

In obtaining relief under Rule 31-2, if the ball were brought back to the point of entering the barn (the door near the front), it would have to be dropped nearer the hole than the place where it came to rest inside the barn. To drop the ball outside the rear wall of the barn would require measuring through the obstruction.

Question by: CHARLES H. STEWART  
Mississippi City, Miss.

**A:** In proceeding under Rule 31-2, the player must drop the ball within two club-lengths of that point on the outside of the obstruction nearest which the ball originally lay; the ball must come to rest not nearer the hole than its original position.

The starting point for measuring is the outside of the rear wall of the barn, immediately behind the place where the ball lay.

The prohibition in the Rule against measuring through the obstruction involves not the process of determining the nearest point on the outside of the obstruction but the process of measuring two club-lengths from that point after the point has been determined.

### **BALL ON PUTTING GREEN: DEFINITION OF**

USGA 60-55

D. 25, R. 35-1d

**Q:** Rule 35-1d provides: "A ball lying on the putting green may be lifted and cleaned." May a ball be lifted and cleaned under this Rule if any part of it is on the putting green or must more than half of it or all of it lie on the green?

Question by: SAM RANDOLPH  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

**A:** A ball is considered to be on the putting green when any part of it touches the surface specially prepared for putting.