



# 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. "62-1" means the first decision issued in 1962. "D" means definition. "R. 37-7" refers to Section 7 of Rule 37 in the 1962 Rules of Golf.

**COMMITTEE: WHEN PERMISSIBLE TO CORRECT UNJUSTIFIED DISQUALIFICATION PENALTY. SCORECARD: COMPETITOR NOT SUBJECT TO PENALTY FOR ADDING INCORRECTLY. COMMITTEE: MEMBERS NOT PROHIBITED FROM COMPETING IN EVENT.**

USGA 62-21  
R. 11-1b, 11-3

**Q:** During the last 18 holes of a 72-hole stroke play team event, without handicaps, one team competitor signed and returned to the scorer his card with all holes marked correctly, but the total of one stroke less than he actually played. The scorer referred this to the rules committee, and they ruled that the competitor was disqualified under USGA Rule 38-2. This was not protested by the competitor. After the decision was made the competitor and another of his team members left the golf course.

After all teams had completed play and scores were added, it was found two teams were tied for first place,

since the other team was disqualified. Due to circumstances which would not permit an 18-hole play-off the next day, the rules committee and two team captains agreed on a sudden-death play-off to determine the first-place team winner and the runner-up team. This was accomplished and one hole decided the first-place and the second-place teams. All team competitors and tournament committee left the golf course to meet later for the Award presentations.

When the awards were to be presented the tournament chairman announced there had been a misinterpretation of the rules, that the competitor could not be disqualified as ruled earlier for turning in the total of one less stroke than he actually played, since all holes were marked correctly. After adding the scores again, it was found the previously disqualified team was in first place. It was further ruled that the team winning the play-off would be awarded second place. My questions are as follows:

1. After a decision has been reached

by the rules committee, can that decision be changed as in the incident previously stated?

2. Is a competitor subject to disqualification due to returning to the score committee a card with a total of one stroke less than he actually played, although each hole is marked correctly?

3. Can the tournament chairman serve on the tournament committee and at the same time compete in tournament play as a competitive team member?

Questions by: T/SGT. KELLY H. ALPIN  
Norton AFB, California

**A. 1:** Yes. The Committee's decision could be changed any time prior to the official announcement of the result of the competition. See Rule 11-1b.

**A. 2:** No. The competitor is only responsible for returning the correct score for each hole. If he totals the score incorrectly, it is the Committee's duty to correct the error without penalty to the competitor. See Rule 38-2.

**A. 3:** There is nothing in the Rules to prevent a member of a Committee from participating in the competition.

**WRONG BALL PLAYED BY  
FELLOW - COMPETITOR:  
COMPETITOR PENALIZED FOR  
PLAYING FROM WRONG POSITION**

USGA 62-20

R. 1, 11-4, 21-3, 27-3

**Q:** In a stroke play event, two players in the same group hit their second shots into a trap guarding the green. Because of their positions in the trap, neither ball was identifiable. A hit one of the balls but did not get out of the hazard, at this point, he discovered he had hit the wrong ball.

B then proceeded to hit the same ball, but he did not return it to its original position. It was not until his third shot that he finally was able to reach the green. At this point he was told by a spectator that he should have returned the ball to its original

position. He then proceeded back into the trap, put another ball on the original spot and played that ball up to the green. At this point, he holed out both balls in two putts. (Player A meanwhile played out the hole with his proper ball without incident).

A search of the Rule book failed to provide an answer to this situation.

Question by: TOM FLYNN  
Vineland, N. J.

**A:** A incurred no penalty because under Rule 21-3 there is no penalty when a competitor plays a stroke in a hazard with a ball other than his own. B's score for the hole was the score made with the ball placed on the spot from which A wrongly played B's original ball, plus a penalty of two strokes — see Rules 21-3 and 27-3.

The Rules do not permit play of a ball from a place to which it has been wrongly played by another competitor — see Rule 1. By applying the rule of equity (Rule 11-4), the principle established in Rule 21-3 concerning play of a ball other than the player's is followed. If B had failed to correct his error he would have been subject to disqualification for breach of Rule 1.

**LIFTING BALL: TO DETERMINE  
WHETHER BALL IN BURROWING  
ANIMAL HOLE, PERMISSIBLE**

USGA 62-18

R. 11-4, 23-1, 32-1, 35-1k

**Q. 1:** May a player lift a ball to determine whether or not it lies (not below the surface) in a hole made by a burrowing animal, reptile or bird, when its position indicates an unusual depression below the ball, or must the player risk penalty for an improper lift, Rule 16?

**A. 1:** The Rules of Golf do not specifically cover the matter, but equity (Rule 11-4) would permit a player to lift his ball without penalty, in the presence of his opponent in match play or marker in stroke play, as Rule 23-1 requires in the case of

lifting a ball for identification.

### **GREEN: DROP**

**Q. 2:** How close to the nearest point off the putting surface must a ball be dropped or placed when it comes to rest on a wrong putting green Rule 35-1k? This question arises because players dislike chewing up the putting surface with their spikes or taking divots on the collar or apron of the green, yet are without specific instructions as to the proper procedure.

**A. 2:** Rule 35-1k provides: "A ball lying on a putting green other than that of the hole being played must be lifted and dropped off the putting green *as near as possible* to where the ball lay but not nearer to the hole and not in a hazard, without penalty."

The words "as near as possible" need not be taken so literally as to require the player to drop so near the green that he would have to stand on the green to play his stroke. The object of the Rule is to protect the putting greens. The matter of divots being taken from collars and aprons must be disregarded in applying the Rule.

Questions by: A. STICKEL  
Sylvania, Ohio

## **HANDICAP DECISIONS**

### **NOT UP TO 50**

USGA Handicap Decision 62-5  
Misc.

**Q:** Are we correctly interpreting the "spirit" of the USGA Handicap System when we limit the amount of handicap that a player may receive?

Does it seem fair that a handicap limit of 30, for example, be enforced, when there is no reason to limit a field? I refer both to a club and to an association where membership is by invitation.

If a player's best 10 of the last 25 scores figure a handicap of 34, for example, should the player have to play with only 30?

Question by:  
MRS. HOMER LICHTENWALTER  
Springfield, N. J.

**A:** The USGA Golf Handicap System does not contemplate an artificial maximum limit on handicaps except that the USGA chart does not provide for handicaps beyond 50.

### **SCORES NOT RETURNED REGULARLY: (1) HANDICAP MAY BE WITHDRAWN (2) RAISING HANDICAP NOT AUTHORIZED**

USGA Handicap Decision 62-7  
References: Men — Section 8-4d  
Women — Section 19-3b

**Q:** A golfer wants to keep her handicap low because:

(1) She wants to be eligible to join or maintain her membership in golfing associations with handicap limits,

(2) She wants to be eligible to enter certain USGA-sponsored or other tournaments with handicap limits,

(3) And the human element that she doesn't want to admit to herself that her golf is slipping. She likes the status symbol of being a 7 or 9 or 10 or even a 17 or 19 instead of the relatively higher handicap she plays to.

The result is she never turns in any scores that could possibly raise her handicap. Even though she may play 15 or 20 or more times at her club or a few rounds outside, she doesn't post a "No Card". She doesn't post anything. She wants to hang on to those ten (sometimes fabricated) scores that give her her illusory handicap. This has many unfortunate ramifications. Team-wise, other players suffer as well as associations victimized by synthetic handicaps.

Question by: MRS. A. A. DREYSPool  
New York, N. Y.

**A:** Clubs or associations would be justified in withdrawing the handicap of a player who does not cooperate in returning scores — see Section 19-3b of "The Conduct of Women's Golf." The USGA Handicap System makes no provision for arbitrarily raising the handicaps of such a player.