

Some Committee Questions That Come to Mind

by **ELI BUDD**

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ONE OF THE QUESTIONS I am frequently asked is, "Should green superintendents participate in green committee meetings?"

I would have to give a positive YES answer to this question. The green committee meeting is the best forum for the superintendent to explain his objectives for both his current and future programs, to explain his needs for new equipment, chemicals, fertilizers, trees, and seed. It's his opportunity to learn the members' thoughts and what he can do about them. It is also the superintendent's conduit to the membership. It is perhaps the most important means for members to understand the problems the superintendent faces.

Another frequently heard question is, "Should the superintendent attend board meetings?"

I can't see the necessity for the superintendent to attend board meetings. In my 25 years on club boards, I have found

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that 95 percent of the meeting is not related to the superintendent's domain. It would be an imposition to a man whose hours start from daybreak and end at sunset daily during the season, to sit for three or four hours and listen to other club matters that do not pertain to him. There is at least one exception. That is the case of a significant change in the golf course itself. Surely the superintendent should attend such meetings.

"Should the superintendent attend budget meetings?"

If you are referring to budget committee meetings that encompass all of the club's committees, I would say no. At Oak Ridge, Keith Scott, our superintendent, prepares his annual budget and presents it to the entire green committee for approval. It is then submitted by the green committee chairman to the board for final approval. We have never had a problem getting his budget approved through these channels.

The Rules of Golf and the Golf Course Superintendent

by **WILLIAM J. WILLIAMS, JR.**
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IAM DELIGHTED to have this opportunity to speak to you about course condition and setup from the point of view of a Rules official and former Chairman of the USGA's Rules of Golf Committee.

When I set out to officiate at the U.S. Open, the Amateur or the Masters, my friends frequently say they hope to see me on television. Not me! That means that there is a Rules problem, and Rules problems can be very difficult to resolve.

It's not just that I'm chicken, which I am, but no one likes to see the outcome of a major golf competition turn on a Rules incident or an official's decision, even if most believe the decision was

correct. A golf competition should be determined by the skill of the players and not the resolution of a Rules problem, an inadvertent Rules violation, or a bad course condition.

Accordingly, it is in our common interest to avoid Rules problems that detract from a competition.

First, a word about the history of the Rules. The earliest written Rules we are aware of were laid down in 1744, at Leith, in or near what is now Edinburgh, Scotland, to govern a competition for the Silver Club of the city of Edinburgh. There were 13 rules; they took up less than two handwritten pages, and they still exist in a bank vault in Edinburgh.

For those who yearn for the simpler days of the original 13 rules, I might mention that Rule 13 deals with French ditches and dykes, scholars' holes, and soldiers' lines — the first local rule. And you will especially enjoy Rule 1: "You must tee your ball within a club's length of the hole." Did the original 13 rules last long? The second page is largely taken up with changes in Rules 5 and 13, which were apparently found to be unsatisfactory.

Early in the 19th century several clubs had their own rules. Later in the century there was an approach toward uniformity based on the Rules of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews



Photos by Tom Meeks

Player in U.S. Amateur Public Links dropping within two club-lengths of where ball last crossed the margin of a lateral water hazard (Rule 26-1c). Note how player is going away from the hole in order to avoid dropping closer to the hole than permitted.

(the R&A). Finally, in 1897, authority was given to the R&A to establish a uniform set of Rules.

Meanwhile, in 1896 and 1897, the USGA developed its own set of Rules, based largely on the R&A's Rules with modifications more adaptable to conditions in the United States. In the 1920s there was a move toward uniformity between the R&A and the USGA, which was finally achieved in 1952. During the period from 1980 through 1983, the Rules book was completely rewritten to make it more user-friendly, in the jargon of the day, but with only modest substantive changes.

Back now to how we can work together to have fairer competitions. Let's begin with the course generally and then work our way from tee to green.

The Course. You would be surprised how many questions we receive that relate to players who omit holes, play holes in wrong order, or play holes that are not part of the competition course. Accordingly, it is a good practice to identify each hole clearly at the teeing ground. If two courses are contiguous, make the signs for the two courses easily distinguishable. If the way from a putting green to the next tee is not obvious, install signs pointing the way.

Speed of Play. Directional markers are permissible. Preferably, they should be out of the line of play. If it is necessary to have a directional marker in the line

of play, make it movable so that the player may remove it if it intervenes on his line of play. There is generally no relief from intervention of an immovable obstruction on the line of play.

Distance markers are permissible as well. For example, yardages to the putting green may be painted on sprinkler heads. Monuments and bushes may be used, but they should be placed where they are not likely to come into play. Charts showing distances from prominent landmarks to the putting green are common, and charts showing the location

of holes on putting greens (measured in paces from the front and nearer side of the putting green) are commonly used in our competitions and on the PGA Tour.

If the disadvantages of being in the boondocks are otherwise adequate, clean them up a bit to facilitate finding the ball. The adjacent areas need not be as manicured as the Augusta National, but I am always amazed at how few balls are lost at Pine Valley.

Teeing Ground. Make sure the tee markers are set out. A line drawn between the markers should be perpendicular to the line of play. They should not be set too far apart, in order to minimize the risk of players playing from in front of the tee markers.

Players may tee their balls two club lengths behind the front edges of the tee markers. Accordingly, if your Committee is going to play the tee markers all the way back, be sure players who tee up two club lengths behind the markers have adequate clearance for their swings.

Bunkers. The sand in bunkers shouldn't be too soft or the ball will bury in the face of the bunker. While the player may probe in the sand for the ball, losing a ball in these circumstances can be very unfair, and the disruption of the bunker caused by searching for the ball can give rise to a number of Rules problems, as we experienced in the 1977 Open, at Southern Hills.

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It's important to know whether a ball is in or out of the bunker. Accordingly, the lips should be recut periodically. Also, avoid spillovers of sand, especially where mechanical rakes are used. Try to avoid situations in which a ball will be against the front or back lip and be unplayable.

Should rakes be in or out of the bunker? We at the USGA have been on both sides of that one. We finally deferred to the experience of Clyde Mangum and the Tour. Rakes should be placed outside the bunker in a position least likely to affect play.

There is no relief from loose impediments in a bunker. Accordingly, try to keep bunkers free of stones, pine cones, leaves, etc. During the recent Rules negotiations, the R&A pressed hard for an amendment that would treat stones in bunkers as movable obstructions. This would permit stones to be removed, and, if the ball moved, it could be replaced without penalty. The R&A argued that playing the stroke under such circumstances is hazardous. Thanks to the good work done by many of you, we were able to respond that it was not a serious problem in our country. The compromise was to permit the R&A to adopt a local rule permitting relief from stones in bunkers. Accordingly, if you're watching the British Open on TV, don't wonder whether there is something wrong with your TV set if you see a player remove a stone in a bunker before playing from the bunker.

Roads. A player is entitled to relief without penalty from interference by an artificially surfaced road. What then is artificially surfaced? Worn tracks do not constitute an artificially surfaced road, but concrete, asphalt, gravel, and even wood chips do. But where does a road composed of gravel or wood chips begin and end? When is a player entitled to a free drop away from the road, and when does the player simply have to remove loose impediments and risk a penalty if the ball thereafter moves? Preferably, roads should be of hard surface and clearly defined.

Staked Trees and Bushes. Remove stakes and guy wires supporting trees as soon as possible. Otherwise players may obtain relief they really don't deserve.

Ground Under Repair. This is the one Rule that refers explicitly to the golf course superintendent, even though by a somewhat old-fashioned name. It permits



Rule 33-2a provides that the committee shall define accurately the margins of water hazards.

a player relief without penalty from areas marked as ground under repair, including material piled for removal and a hole made by a greenkeeper, even if not so marked. What about grass cuttings dumped near the greens? Grass cuttings and other material that have been abandoned and left on the course are not intended to be removed and are not ground under repair unless so marked. Apart from being eyesores, such piles of debris create problems, because it is rarely clear whether anyone intends to remove them. If they are not GUR, a player whose ball is in grass cuttings is in serious trouble, even if he can find his ball.

What about tree nurseries? Should they be marked out of bounds or ground under repair? If it was desirable to prevent play from the nurseries, we marked them out of bounds. We have since been persuaded by the R&A that it is better to mark them ground under repair and prohibit play from the area. See Note 2 to the Definition of "ground under repair."

In my opinion, a golf course is no place for flower beds. You don't want people playing from them, but if you must have them and they are located where they are likely to come into play, mark their margins clearly, declare them to be ground under repair and prohibit play.

Bird nests have brought the USGA and R&A Rules Committees to their knees. In deference to the possible occupants, we have determined that they should be treated as immovable

obstructions, whether or not they are occupied. I wouldn't mind terribly if they were quietly removed by the groundskeeper before the Rules officials arrive.

Putting Green. Where does the putting green end and the apron begin? The answer may be important. A ball on the putting green may be lifted and cleaned, whereas a ball on the apron may not. Ball marks on the putting green may be repaired, whereas ball marks on the apron may not. Sand and loose soil on the putting green may be removed, whereas sand and loose soil on the apron may not. It is important, therefore, to mow the greens in such a way that the border separating the putting green from the apron is clear. If an official is walking with a player, it is relatively easy to prevent a possible inadvertent penalty by commenting on the difficulty of determining where one ends and the other begins, or that a ball that appears to be on the putting green is not. If an official is stationary, it is very awkward to pop up and point out to a player that his ball is not on the putting green. While the official is only trying to save the player from an inadvertent penalty, the player may regard the official as interrupting his concentration to point out what to him may be obvious.

There is no relief for spike marks on a putting green. For a while the European Tour and the South African Tour had local rules permitting repair of spike marks, but no more. Accordingly, I would urge you to do everything you can to avoid putting green conditions that cause spike marks.

Old hole plugs should be properly repaired, with the surface of the plug neither above nor below the surface of the green. While the Rules now permit a player to repair such hole plugs, this is relatively easy if it simply involves tapping down a hole plug to the level of the putting green; it is almost impossible if it requires raising the old plug.

There is no relief from stones or acorns solidly embedded in the putting green. Accordingly, if possible, sweep the putting green before mowing it.

Finally, a personal note. I am not much of a golfer. A disproportionately large part of my pleasure on a golf course comes from being outdoors in pleasant surroundings. To the extent you contribute to the appreciation of the game by me and those like me, I sincerely thank you.