

1-4/7

Ball Lost in Either Water Hazard or Casual Water Overflowing Hazard

Q. It is known or virtually certain that a ball is lost either in a water hazard or in an area of casual water overflowing the hazard, but it is not known which. What is the proper procedure?

A. In equity (Rule 1-4), the player must proceed under the water hazard Rule. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- 25/2 Overflow from Water Hazard.

1-4/8

Nearest Point of Relief from Cart Path Is in Casual Water; Nearest Point of Relief from Casual Water Is Back on Cart Path

Q. A player's ball lies on a paved cart path from which he wishes to take relief under Rule 24-2b(i). It appears that the nearest point of relief will be in a large area of casual water which adjoins the cart path and the nearest point of relief from the casual water under Rule 25-1b(i) would be back on the cart path. What are the player's options?

A. The player may proceed in accordance with Rule 24-2 and then, if applicable, Rule 25-1. He is not entitled to take relief from both the immovable obstruction and the casual water in a single procedure, unless after proceeding under these Rules, the player is essentially back where he started and it is evident that such a procedure is necessary to obtain relief from both conditions.

Therefore, the player should proceed as follows:

1. He may lift and drop the ball in accordance with Rule 24-2b(i) in the casual water.
2. He may play the ball as it lies or take relief from the casual water, in which case he would lift and drop the ball in accordance with Rule 25-1b(i).
3. If the ball when dropped comes to rest in such a position that there is interference by the cart path, he may play the ball as it lies or proceed in accordance with Rule 24-2b(i). If the nearest point of relief is in such a position that there would be interference by the casual water, as an additional option, the player may, in equity (Rule 1-4) obtain relief without penalty as follows: Using the new position of the ball on the cart path, the nearest point of relief from both the cart path and the casual water shall be determined which is not in a hazard or on a putting green. The player shall lift the ball and drop it within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest point of relief, on a part of the course which avoids interference by the cart path and the casual water and is not in a hazard or on a putting green.

If the dropped ball rolls into a position where there is interference

by either the cart path or the casual water, Rule 20-2c applies.

The same principle would apply if there was interference from any two conditions, i.e., casual water, a hole made by a burrowing animal, an immovable obstruction, from which relief without penalty was available and in taking relief from one condition it resulted in interference from the second condition. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- 25-1b/11.5 Ball in Casual Water Within Ground Under Repair; Whether Player Entitled to Take Relief from Both Conditions in Single Procedure.

I-4/9

Bird's Nest Interfering with Stroke

Q. A player's ball comes to rest in a bird's nest or so close to the nest that he could not make a stroke without damaging it. In equity (Rule I-4), does the player have any options in addition to playing the ball as it lies or, if applicable, proceeding under Rule 26 or 28?

A. Yes. It is unreasonable to expect the player to play from such a situation and unfair to require the player to incur a penalty stroke under Rule 26 (Water Hazards) or Rule 28 (Ball Unplayable), although these Rules remain an option, if applicable.

If the ball lay through the green, the player may, without penalty, drop a ball within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest spot not nearer the hole that would allow him to make his stroke without damaging the nest and that is not in a hazard and not on a putting green. The ball when dropped must first strike a part of the course through the green.

If the ball lay in a hazard, the player may drop a ball, without penalty, within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest spot not nearer the hole that would allow him to make his stroke without damaging the nest. If possible, the ball must be dropped in the same hazard and, if not possible, in a similar nearby hazard, but in either case not nearer the hole. If it is not possible for the player to drop the ball in a hazard, he may drop it, under penalty of one stroke, outside the hazard, keeping the point where the original ball lay between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped.

If the ball lay on the putting green, the player may, without penalty, place a ball at the nearest spot not nearer the hole and not in a hazard that would allow him to make his stroke without damaging the nest.

If interference by anything other than the bird's nest makes the stroke clearly impracticable or if damage to the bird's nest would occur only through the use of a clearly unreasonable stroke or an unnecessarily abnormal stance, swing, or direction of play, the player may not take relief as prescribed above, but he is not precluded from proceeding under Rule 26 or 28, if applicable. (Revised)

1-4/10

Dangerous Situation; Rattlesnake or Bees Interfere with Play

Q. A player's ball comes to rest in a situation dangerous to the player, e.g. near a live rattlesnake or a bees' nest. In equity (Rule 1-4), does the player have any options in addition to playing the ball as it lies or, if applicable, proceeding under Rule 26 or 28?

A. Yes. It is unreasonable to expect the player to play from such a dangerous situation and unfair to require the player to incur a penalty under Rule 26 (Water Hazards) or Rule 28 (Ball Unplayable), although these Rules remain an option, if applicable.

If the ball lay through the green, the player may, without penalty, drop a ball within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest spot not nearer the hole that is not dangerous and is not in a hazard and not on a putting green.

If the ball lay in a hazard, the player may drop a ball, without penalty, within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest spot not nearer the hole that is not dangerous. If possible, the ball must be dropped in the same hazard and, if not possible, in a similar nearby hazard, but in either case not nearer the hole. If it is not possible for the player to drop the ball in a hazard, he may drop it, under penalty of one stroke, outside the hazard, keeping the point where the original ball lay between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped.

If the ball lay on the putting green, the player may, without penalty, place a ball at the nearest spot not nearer the hole that is not dangerous and that is not in a hazard.

If interference by anything other than the dangerous situation makes the stroke clearly impracticable or if the situation would be dangerous only through the use of a clearly unreasonable stroke or an unnecessarily abnormal stance, swing, or direction of play, the player may not take relief as prescribed above, but he is not precluded from proceeding under Rule 26 or 28, if applicable. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- [33-8/22 Local Rule Treating Ant Hills as Ground Under Repair.](#)

1-4/12

Player Breaches Rules More Than Once Prior to Stroke; Whether Multiple Penalties Should Be Applied

Situations arise prior to or as a result of a stroke in which a player breaches a single Rule more than once, or breaches separate Rules, in a single act or in different but sequential acts. The question arises whether it is appropriate to apply a penalty to each separate breach.

The Rules expressly provide that multiple penalties are not to be applied in certain situations (e.g. Rules 15-2, 18, 20-7 and 21). However, there are many other situations where multiple breaches of the Rules may occur and the Rules themselves do not expressly specify whether a penalty should be applied to each separate breach. In such cases, equity (Rule 1-4) applies, and the following principles should be used:

1. **One Act Results in One Rule Being Breached More Than Once – Single Penalty Applied**

Example: In stroke play, a competitor's ball on the putting green strikes a fellow-competitor's ball in breach of Rule 19-5a and then strikes another fellow-competitor's ball, also in breach of Rule 19-5a. The ruling would be a single two-stroke penalty.

2. **One Act Results in Two Rules Being Breached – Single Penalty Applied**

Example: In stroke play, a competitor is considering putting his ball from a bunker and rakes a footprint in the bunker on his line of play. Both Rule 13-2 and Rule 13-4a have been breached. The ruling would be a single two-stroke penalty.

3. **Related Acts Result in One Rule Being Breached More Than Once – Single Penalty Applied**

Example 1: In stroke play, a competitor takes several practice swings in a hazard, touching the ground each time. The practice swings are related acts breaching a single Rule. The ruling would be a single two-stroke penalty under Rule 13-4b (see Decision 13-4/3 but also see Principle 6 Example 3).

Example 2: A and B are fellow-competitors playing a par three hole. B is to play first and A asks B whether it is best to play for the centre of the green or to play for the flagstick and B advises that it is best to play for the centre of the green. A then asks what club B is going to use. B says he will hit a six iron. After B's stroke, which fell short of the green, A asks B if he had hit it well and B confirms that he did. A then hit his shot. The ruling is that both competitors incur a single two-stroke penalty under Rule 8-1 for seeking or giving three related pieces of information all of which might assist A in his choice of club for his next stroke and the way to play it. (But see also Principle 6 Example 2).



4. Related Acts Result in Two Rules Being Breached – Single Penalty Applied

Example 1: In stroke play, a competitor is considering putting his ball from a bunker and rakes several footprints in the bunker on his line of play. Both Rule 13-2 and Rule 13-4a have been breached multiple times by related acts. The ruling would be a single two-stroke penalty.

Example 2: In stroke play, a competitor's ball moves prior to address and, while it is in motion, it is accidentally stopped by the competitor's club in breach of Rule 19-2 and comes to rest against it. The competitor then moves the club, as a result of which his ball moves – a breach of Rule 18-2. These related acts would result in a single one-stroke penalty (see Decision 19-2/1.5).

5. Unrelated Acts Result in Two Rules Being Breached – Multiple Penalties Applied

Example 1: In stroke play, a competitor (1) touches the ground in a hazard with his club while taking practice swings in a hazard and (2) improves his line of play by bending a shrub with his hand. The ruling would be a two-stroke penalty under Rule 13-4 (touching the ground in a hazard with his club) and a further penalty of two strokes under Rule 13-2 (for the unrelated act of improving his line of play by moving something growing), giving a total penalty of four strokes (see Decision 13-4/28).

Example 2: Under Example 2 in Principle 4 above, if the ball is not replaced before the competitor makes his next stroke, the failure to replace the ball is an unrelated act and the competitor incurs an additional penalty of two strokes under Rule 18-2.

6. Unrelated Acts Result in One Rule Being Breached More Than Once – Multiple Penalties Applied

Example 1: In stroke play, a competitor (1) purposely steps on another player's line of putt with the intention of improving the line, and then (2) purposely stops his own ball in motion after it began moving without apparent cause before address. As the two acts were unrelated, the ruling would be two separate penalties, each of two strokes, for breaches of Rule 1-2, giving a total penalty of four strokes.

Example 2: A and B are fellow-competitors waiting for the green to

clear at a par three hole. A, who has been hitting all his iron shots right of target, asks B if his (A's) alignment has been wrong. B confirms that A's alignment has been wrong. After the green clears A asks B what club B is going to play. B does not answer. The ruling would be that A and B both incur a two-stroke penalty for asking for and giving advice about A's alignment (advice on the method of making a stroke). A incurs an additional two-stroke penalty for asking for information from B, which might assist A with his choice of club. Although both requests by A are breaches of the same Rule (Rule 8-1) their character is sufficiently different to warrant two separate penalties.

Example 3: Under Example 1 in Principle 3 above, the competitor then makes a stroke and fails to get the ball out of the hazard. He makes two more practice swings in the hazard, again touching the ground each time. The ruling would be two separate two-stroke penalties under Rule 13-4b. The link between the acts was broken by the competitor's intervening stroke (see also Decision I-4/14).

For the purposes of this Decision:

- in making the judgment whether two acts are related or unrelated, the Committee should consider, among other things, the similarity of the acts, how close to one another they are in terms of time and location and whether there were any intervening events;
- each principal subsection of a Rule is considered a separate Rule (e.g. Rules 1-2, 1-3 and 1-4 are considered separate Rules); and
- the following sub-sections (but only these ones) are also considered separate Rules: 4-3a, 4-3b, 13-4a, 13-4b, 13-4c, 14-1a, 14-1b, 14-2a, 14-2b, 16-1a, 16-1b, 16-1c, 16-1d, 16-1e, 16-1f, 17-3a, 17-3b and 17-3c. (Revised)

STROKE PLAY: DOUBT AS TO PROCEDURE

3-3/1

Provisional Ball Used as Second Ball When Not Determinable Whether Original Ball Is Out of Bounds

Q. In stroke play, a player is in doubt as to whether his drive may be out of bounds. He plays a provisional ball under Rule 27-2. He finds the original ball and cannot determine whether it is out of bounds or not. The player wishes to consider the provisional ball as his second ball under Rule 3-3 and complete the play of the hole with both balls. Is this permissible?

A. Yes. In invoking Rule 3-3 after playing a provisional ball, the player must treat the provisional ball as a second ball. Although Note 3 to Rule 3-3 provides:

“A second ball played under Rule 3-3 is not a provisional ball under Rule 27-2,” the reverse is not true in the present case. (Revised)

3-3/5

Whether Score with Second Ball Counts If Ball Dropped in Wrong Place and Played

Q. In stroke play, a competitor's ball came to rest on an artificially-surfaced road which had not been declared an integral part of the course. The competitor, not sure whether the road was an obstruction or an integral part of the course, invoked Rule 3-3 and announced that he wished his score with the second ball to count. He played his original ball as it lay and dropped and played a second ball under Rule 24-2b(i). He met all the requirements of that Rule, except that he dropped the second ball almost two club-lengths from the nearest point of relief instead of within one club-length. Does the score with the second ball count?

A. No. Rule 3-3b(i) states in part: "If, before taking further action, the competitor has announced which ball he wishes to count and provided the Rules permit the procedure used for the selected ball, the score with that ball counts." In this case, the Rules do not permit the procedure used for the ball selected in advance to count (i.e. the second ball) since it was dropped almost two club-lengths from the nearest point of relief. Accordingly, the score with the original ball counts. (Revised)

3-3/6

Competitor Plays Original Ball After Doubtful Situation Has Arisen and Then Invokes Rule 3-3

Q. In stroke play, a competitor's ball lies in a water hazard. A movable stake defining the margin of the hazard interferes with the area of his intended swing. He makes his next stroke, avoiding the stake. It then occurs to him that he may have been entitled to remove the stake. The competitor informs his marker that he is invoking Rule 3-3 and elects to score with a second ball. He removes the stake and drops a second ball at the spot from which his original ball was played. He holes out with both balls. What is the ruling?

A. The situation that caused the doubt arose when the competitor's ball lay in the water hazard and the stake interfered with his swing. Since the competitor took further action, i.e. played the original ball, after the situation that caused the doubt had arisen, the score with the original ball must count – see the last paragraph of Rule 3-3a.

However, the competitor incurs no penalty for having played the second ball. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- 26-1/5 Ball Dropped and Played Under Water Hazard Rule; Original Ball Then Found in Hazard and Holed Out as Second Ball.

3-3/10

Competitor Plays Three Balls When Doubtful of Rights

Q. Are there any circumstances under which a competitor in stroke play, who is doubtful of his rights or procedure, may play a third ball under Rule 3-3?

A. No. If a competitor so proceeds, the score with the original ball shall count. If the Rules do not permit the procedure used for the original ball the competitor incurs the penalty prescribed for the improper procedure. (Revised)

3-3/14

Competitor Invokes Rule 3-3; Second Ball Played First

Q. A competitor accidentally causes his ball to move in breach of Rule 18-2. He is unsure whether the ball must be replaced or played from its new position. He announces that he will invoke Rule 3-3, places a second ball on the spot from which the original ball was moved and states that he wishes the second ball to count if the Rules permit. He plays the second ball first and then plays the original ball. Is the competitor's procedure correct in terms of the order in which the balls were played?

A. Yes. Rule 3-3 does not require the original ball to be played first and, therefore, the competitor's procedure was acceptable. (Revised)

Other Decisions related to Rule 3-3: See "Doubt as to Procedure" in the Index.

DECLARING EXCESS CLUB OUT OF PLAY

4-4c/1

Excess Club Declared Out of Play Before Round

Q. Shortly before the start of a round, a player discovers that he inadvertently has 15 clubs in his golf bag. He declares one of the clubs out of play to his opponent, marker or fellow-competitor and begins the round. Is the player subject to penalty?

A. No. In these narrow circumstances (i.e. the discovery was made shortly before the round, the player had 15 clubs, having the extra club was inadvertent and the player declared one of the clubs out of play), for the purposes of applying Rule 4-4a, the player is not considered to be carrying the club or to have selected the club for play, even though it is physically in his possession. If possible, the player should seek to highlight the club that is out of play by setting it apart from the other clubs, such as by placing it on the floor of his golf cart or turning it upside down in his golf bag.

In any other circumstances (e.g. the player carries more than 15 clubs, etc.), the player is in breach of Rule 4-4a. (Revised)

6-6a/5

Marker Attests Wrong Score Knowingly But Competitor Unaware Score Wrong

Q. A competitor returned a score lower than actually taken for a hole by failing to include a penalty on his score card that he did not know he had incurred. In accordance with the Exception to Rule 6-6d, the competitor's score for the hole must be adjusted to include that penalty and the additional two-stroke penalty under the Exception.

The competitor's marker (a fellow-competitor) knew of the penalty prior to the score card being returned but nevertheless signed the score card. Is the marker also subject to penalty?

A. Yes. The Committee should disqualify the marker under Rule 33-7. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- [1-3/6 Marker Attests Wrong Score Knowingly and Competitor Aware Score Wrong.](#)
- [33-7/9 Competitor Who Knows Player Has Breached Rules Does Not Inform Player or Committee in Timely Manner.](#)

6-6b/7

Alteration to Score by Competitor After Marker has Signed Score Card

Q. After the competitor's score card is signed by his marker but before the score card is returned to the Committee, the competitor discovers an error with regard to the score for a hole, corrects his score and signs the score card. What is the ruling if the marker: (a) is still available, or (b) cannot be located?

A. When the competitor altered his score for the hole, he invalidated the marker's verification of the score for that hole.

In (a), where the marker is still available, the competitor must ensure that the marker agrees with the alteration prior to returning the score card. Otherwise, the competitor would be disqualified because he has, in effect, returned a score card that has not been signed by the marker.

In (b), where the marker cannot be located, the competitor should inform the Committee of his inability to locate his marker to agree with the alteration to the score card. The Committee should make reasonable efforts to contact the marker. If unsuccessful, the Committee should accept confirmation of the alteration by someone else who witnessed the hole (e.g. the marker's caddie or the competitor's caddie) or, if no one else is available, by the competitor himself. While normally a competitor lacking proper verification of his score card is disqualified, in this exceptional case there is no penalty and the scores should be accepted. If the competitor returns the score card without informing the Committee of the alteration, he is disqualified. (Revised)

6-6d/5

Spectators Allege Competitor's Score Incorrect

Q. A returned a score of 4 for the 18th hole but spectators who observed his play of the hole alleged that A struck the ball 5 times during the play of the hole. If this is brought to the attention of the Committee before the close of competition, what should the Committee do?

A. If any doubt arises as to the correctness of a score card, the Committee should consult with the competitor and marker and also take into account the testimony of other witnesses.

If the Committee concludes that the competitor made more than 4 strokes during the play of the 18th hole, the competitor is disqualified under Rule 6-6d. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 6-6a/4 Marker Refuses to Sign Competitor's Card After Dispute Resolved in Favour of Competitor.
- 34-3/4 Dispute as to Whether Competitor Played from Outside Teeing Ground.
- 34-3/9 Resolution of Questions of Fact; Referee and Committee Responsibility.

SUSPENSION OF PLAY: PROCEDURE

6-8b/1

What Constitutes Discontinuance of Play

Q. In stroke play, a group was playing a hole when the Committee announced that play was suspended for a non-dangerous situation (e.g. darkness). Before deciding how to proceed, the players took approximately 1–2 minutes to discuss the available options. Are the players considered to have discontinued play?

A. No. Rule 6-8b allows a player to continue play of a hole after the Committee has suspended play if he does so “without delay”. Under Rule 6-8b, “without delay” should be interpreted to allow a player a brief amount of time to consider the available options or to confer with other players in the group before deciding whether to continue. This might include situations where the player begins to proceed towards the clubhouse or to take some other action that suggests that he will discontinue; such initial actions do not preclude the player from deciding to continue play, as long as he does so within the permissible brief period. If a player:

1. takes more than a brief amount of time (e.g. in normal circumstances more than 2 minutes) to determine whether or not to continue play, or
2. marks and lifts his ball through the green or in a hazard under Rule 6-8c when authority to do so only exists if the player has discontinued play he is considered to have discontinued play and may only resume play when ordered by the Committee. (Revised)

8/2

Team Captain Gives Advice While Playing

Q. If the Committee has adopted the Note to Rule 8 as a condition of the competition, may a team captain, who is a playing member of the team, give advice while playing in the competition to a team mate other than his partner?

A. No. As the team captain is a player playing on the course, if he were to give advice during his stipulated round to anyone other than his partner, he would be in breach of Rule 8-1. (Revised)

Decisions related to 8/1 and 8/2: See “Team Competition” in the Index.

8-2b/1

Caddie Casts Shadow to Indicate Line of Putt

Q. A caddie casts his shadow on the putting green for the purpose of indicating to the player a line of putt. Is this permissible?

A. Yes, but only if the shadow is removed prior to the stroke. (Revised)

8-2b/2

Caddie Attending Flagstick Advises Player to Aim at His Foot

Q. A player’s ball lies on the putting green and his caddie attends the flagstick for him. The caddie suggests, before the stroke, that the player aim at the caddie’s left foot. Is the player in breach of Rule 8-2b?

A. If the caddie had placed his foot in position for the purpose of pointing out the line of putt, the player was in breach of Rule 8-2b as soon as the caddie placed his foot in that position. The breach could not be corrected by the caddie subsequently moving his foot.

If the caddie did not initially place his foot in such a position for the purpose of pointing out the line of putt but subsequently suggested the player aim at his left foot, the player would be in breach of Rule 8-2b if the caddie did not move that foot to another position that does not indicate a line of putt prior to the stroke.

The same answer would apply if a player’s partner attends the flagstick for him. (Revised)

8-2b/4

Whether Team Captain Who Is Authorised to Give Advice May Be Required to Keep Off Putting Greens

Q. In a team competition, the Committee wishes to introduce a condition of competition permitting a team captain to give advice to members of his team, including pointing out the line of putt. However, it wishes to stipulate that he must keep off the putting greens. Is such a condition permitted?

A. Yes – see Note to Rule 8. (Revised)

Related Decisions: See “Team Competition” in the Index.

Other Decisions related to Rule 8-2b: See “Indicating Line for Putting” and “Line of Putt” in the Index.

9-2/3.5

Player Refuses to Tell Opponent How Many Strokes He Has Taken

Q. In a match, B asks A how many strokes he (A) has taken during play of a hole or on a hole just completed. A refuses to give B the information requested. What is the ruling?

A. If, during the play of a hole, A does not provide the number of strokes he has taken prior to B making his next stroke or, in the case of the hole just completed, prior to any player making a stroke from the next teeing ground, A incurs the general penalty of loss of hole (Rule 2-6) for failing to act in accordance with the requirements of Rule 9-2a. The penalty applies to the hole being played or, if the hole has been completed, the penalty applies to the last hole played. (Revised)

BALL FALLING OFF TEE

11-3/1

Stroke Misses Ball; Ball Then Accidentally Knocked Off Tee

Q. A player teed his ball within the teeing ground. He made a stroke at the ball but missed it. He addressed the ball again and accidentally knocked it off the tee. What is the ruling?

A. When the player made a stroke at the ball, it was in play and Rule 11-3 no longer applied. As the player caused his ball in play to move when addressing it, he incurred a penalty stroke and was obliged to replace the ball (Rule 18-2). (Revised)

Related Decision:

- 18-2/2 Ball Falling Off Tee When Stroke Just Touches It Is Picked Up and Re-Teed.

IMPROVING LIE, AREA OF INTENDED STANCE OR SWING, OR LINE OF PLAY

13-2/0.5

Meaning of “Improve” in Rule 13-2

Q. Rule 13-2 prohibits a player from improving certain areas. What does “improve” mean?

A. In the context of Rule 13-2, “improve” means to change for the better so that the player creates a potential advantage with respect to the position or lie of his ball, the area of his intended stance or swing, his line of play or a reasonable extension of that line beyond the hole, or the area in which he is to drop or place a ball. Therefore, merely changing an area protected by Rule 13-2 will not be a breach of Rule 13-2 unless it creates such a potential advantage for the player in his play.

Examples of changes that are unlikely to create such a potential advantage are if a player:

- repairs a small pitch-mark, smooths a footprint in a bunker or replaces a divot in a divot hole on his line of play five yards in front of his ball prior to making a 150-yard approach shot from through the green;
- whose ball lies in the middle of a long, shallow-faced fairway bunker, smooths footprints five yards in front of his ball and on his line of play prior to playing a long shot over the smoothed area;
- accidentally knocks down several leaves from a tree in his area of intended swing with a practice swing, but there are still so many leaves or branches remaining that the area of intended swing has not been materially affected; or
- whose ball lies in thick rough 180 yards from the green, walks forward and pulls strands of grass on his line of play and tosses them in the air to determine the direction of the wind.

Examples of changes that are likely to create such a potential advantage are if a player:

- repairs a pitch-mark through the green or replaces a divot in a divot hole five yards in front of his ball and on his line of play prior to making a stroke from off the putting green that might be affected by the pitch-mark or divot hole (e.g. a putt or a low-running shot);
- whose ball lies in a greenside bunker, smooths footprints five yards in front of his ball on his line of play prior to playing a short shot intended to be played over the smoothed area;
- accidentally knocks down a single leaf from a tree in his area of intended swing with a practice swing, but, as this was one of very few leaves that might either interfere with his swing or fall and thereby distract him, the area of intended swing has been materially affected; or
- pulls strands of grass from rough a few inches behind his ball to test the wind, but thereby reduces a potential distraction for the player, or resistance to his club, in the area of his intended swing.

The determination as to whether a player has created a potential

advantage by his actions is made by reference to all the circumstances immediately prior to his stroke. (Revised)

13-2/8

Player's Lie or Line of Play Affected by Pitch-Mark Made by Partner's, Opponent's or Fellow-Competitor's Ball

Q. A player's lie, line of play or area of intended swing through the green is affected by a pitch-mark made by his partner's, his opponent's or a fellow-competitor's ball. Is the player entitled to repair the pitch-mark?

A. If the pitch-mark was there before the player's ball came to rest, he is not entitled to repair it if doing so would improve his lie, line of play, area of intended swing or other area covered by Rule 13-2.

If the pitch-mark was created after the player's ball came to rest, in equity (Rule 1-4), he may repair it. A player is entitled to the lie which his stroke gave him. (Revised)

13-2/13

Bending Grass in Removal of Loose Impediments

Q. A player whose ball was in long grass rolled a stone away from the ball, pressing down some of the long grass in the process. What is the ruling?

A. Except when both the loose impediment and the ball lie in or touch the same hazard, any loose impediment may be removed without penalty (Rule 23-1). However, if the pressing down of the grass improves the position or lie of his ball, the area of his intended swing or his line of play, the player is in breach of Rule 13-2. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 13-2/26 Natural Object Interfering with Swing Moved to Determine Whether It Is Loose.
- 23-1/4 Breaking Off Part of Large Loose Impediment.

13-2/25

Player Removes Boundary Post on Line of Play But Replaces It Before Playing

Q. A player removed a post defining out of bounds and, as a result, improved his line of play. He realised he had made a mistake and replaced it before making his next stroke. What is the ruling?

A. The player was in breach of Rule 13-2 the moment he moved the post and there was nothing he could do to avoid the penalty. The replacement of the post before the next stroke was irrelevant. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 13-2/1.1 Player Attempts to Take Stance Fairly But Improves Line of Play by Moving Interfering Growing Object.
- 13-2/17 Removal of Boundary Stake Interfering with Swing.

13-2/29

Worsening and Then Restoring Line of Play

Q. The player's ball lies through the green behind a greenside bunker that is five yards in front of his ball and ten yards from the hole. The player walks through the bunker, for example, to remove a rake on his line of play or determine the distance to the hole. On his way back to the ball, he smooths the footprints he made and, as a result, creates a potential advantage by improving his line of play. Is such smoothing permissible?

A. No, the player is in breach of Rule 13-2. If a player worsens the lie of his ball, the area of his intended stance or swing, his line of play or a reasonable extension of that line beyond the hole, or the area in which he is to drop or place a ball, he is not entitled to restore that area to its original condition (but see Decision 13-2/29.3). (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- [13-4/10 Referee Enters a Bunker; Whether Player May Smooth Footprints.](#)
- [13-4/11 Smoothing Footprints Made in Search for Ball in Bunker Before Playing Stroke from Bunker.](#)

13-2/32

Improving Line of Play by Removing Stone from Wall

Q. A stone wall on the course is on a player's line of play. The player removes a stone from the top of the wall and, as a result, improves his line of play. Is this permissible?

A. No. The wall as a whole does not meet the definition of a movable obstruction and the individual stones are intended not to be moved. Therefore, the wall is an immovable obstruction and all parts of the wall are deemed to be fixed. In improving his line of play by removing part of an immovable obstruction, the player was in breach of Rule 13-2. The same ruling would apply if the wall had been declared an integral part of the course. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- [24-2b/14 Window of Clubhouse Opened and Ball Played Through Window.](#)
- [24-2b/15 Opening Barn Doors to Play Shot Through Barn.](#)
- [24-2b/15.3 Status of Movable Part of Drainage Hose.](#)
- [24-2b/15.5 Door of Building In Open or Closed Position.](#)

13-2/33

Outside Agency Removes Immovable Obstruction on Player's Line of Play

Q. A stake supporting a young tree has been deemed an immovable obstruction by the Committee. A player's ball comes to rest in such a position that the stake intervenes on his line of play but does not interfere with his swing or stance. At that point, an outside agency removes the stake and, as a result, improves his line of play. What is the ruling?

A. If the player allowed the outside agency to remove the stake, the player loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play for a breach of Rule 13-2.

If the player did not know the stake had been removed, or if he did know but was not in a position to prevent it, there is no penalty and the player may replace the stake but he is not required to do so. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 23-1/10 Removal of Loose Impediments Affecting Player's Play.
- 33-7/7 Competitor Seeks Help from Fellow-Competitor to Avoid Penalty.

13-4/33

Bunker Covered by Leaves; Player Touches Leaves During Backswing

Q. A player hits a ball into a bunker which is covered by leaves (loose impediments). The player removes as many leaves as will enable him to see a part of the ball in accordance with Rule 12-1. If the player then touches some of the leaves on his backswing, is he in breach of the Rules?

A. Yes. If the player touches leaves on his backswing, he is in breach of Rule 13-4c which prohibits a player from touching a loose impediment in a hazard before making a stroke in the hazard. A stroke does not begin until after the completion of the player's backswing – see Definition of "Stroke".

If accumulations of loose impediments in bunkers, such as fallen leaves, seasonally create an abnormal problem, the Committee may make a Local Rule declaring accumulations of loose impediments in bunkers to be ground under repair. Rule 25-1b(ii) would then apply. (Revised)

14/4

Club Breaks During Downswing; Swing Stopped Short of Ball; Clubhead Falls and Moves Ball

Q. The shaft of a player's club broke during his downswing. The player stopped his swing short of the ball, but the clubhead fell and moved the ball. What is the ruling?

A. The player did not make a stroke – see Definition of “Stroke”. If the ball was not in play, i.e. the incident involved a tee shot, no penalty was incurred, and a ball must be played from the teeing ground. If the ball was in play, the player would incur a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 and the ball must be replaced. (Revised)

ARTIFICIAL DEVICES AND UNUSUAL EQUIPMENT; ABNORMAL USE OF EQUIPMENT

14-3/0.5

Local Rule Permitting Use of Distance-Measuring Device

Q. May a Committee, by Local Rule, permit the use of distance-measuring devices?

A. Yes. A Committee may establish a Local Rule allowing players to use a device to measure or gauge distance only (see the Note to Rule 14-3). However, if a distance-measuring device has additional functionality that can gauge or measure other conditions that might affect a player's play (e.g. elevation change, wind speed, etc.), the use of any such additional function would be a breach of Rule 14-3.

In the absence of such a Local Rule, the use of a distance-measuring device would be contrary to Rule 14-3. (Revised)

14-3/0.7

Player Obtains Distance Information Measured with Electronic Device

Q. During a stipulated round, a player himself uses an electronic-measuring device to obtain distance information on several occasions. The Committee has not adopted a Local Rule allowing players to use devices to measure or gauge distance (see Note to Rule 14-3). What is the ruling?

A. The player is disqualified for breaching Rule 14-3 more than once during the stipulated round. The prohibition in Rule 14-3 against using an electronic device to obtain distance information extends to the player or a member of his side using such a device to obtain distance information. This prohibition in Rule 14-3 would also extend to a player who asks an outside agency to use an artificial device to obtain such distance information for him. However, the player would not be penalised merely because a spectator or other outside agency provided such information to him without being requested to do so. Similarly, a player is not prohibited from obtaining distance information from scoreboards or from a referee (e.g. when using an artificial device to determine the order of play). (Revised)

Decisions related to 14-3/0.5 and 14-3/0.7:

- 8-1/2 Exchanging Distance Information.
- 17/3.5 Reflector on Flagstick.

14-3/5.5

Electronic Device Providing Distances Between Various Points

Q. With regard to Decision 14-3/5, may a player use an electronic device containing the same information?

A. Yes. Exception 2 to Rule 14-3 applies, but the player must not use a device to measure distance. However, see also the Note to Rule 14-3. (Revised)

14-3/6

Holding Ball in Hand Against Grip When Putting

Q. A player putts with a golf ball held in his left hand against the grip. He claims the pressure transmitted to the grip through the ball assists him in putting. Is such use of a ball permissible?

A. No. The player is using equipment in an abnormal manner to assist him in making a stroke and is in breach of Rule 14-3. (Revised)

14-3/6.5

Holding Ball in Hand Against Grip for Practice Swings or Practice Strokes

Q. Decision 14-3/6 clarifies that a player may not make a stroke while holding a golf ball in his hand against the grip to assist him. May the player make a practice swing or practice stroke (when permitted by Rule 7-2) while holding a golf ball in the same manner?

A. Yes. The prohibition in Rule 14-3 against using equipment in an abnormal manner applies to strokes that count in the player's score and not to practice swings or practice strokes. (Revised)

14-3/7

Player with Injured Right Wrist Inserts Left Thumb Under Elastic Bandage on Right Wrist and Hand

Q. A player, who wore an elastic bandage around his right wrist and hand because of an injury, inserted his left thumb under the bandage where it crosses his right palm, and played a number of strokes with his left thumb so located. Is this permissible?

A. No. Although a player may wear an elastic bandage for medical purposes in accordance with Exception I to Rule 14-3, there is no need for him to insert his thumb under the bandage. Therefore, such an action would constitute use of equipment in an abnormal manner in breach of Rule 14-3. (Revised)

14-3/8

Adhesive Tape

Q. May a player wear adhesive tape on his hands or apply such tape to a golf glove?

A. The use of adhesive tape, or similar coverings of the hand, for any medical reasons, e.g. to reduce blisters or to eliminate the possibility of skin splits between the fingers, is not contrary to the Rules. However, the application of tape to the hand or the construction of a similar covering must not be excessive (i.e. must not otherwise assist the player in gripping and its thickness must be comparable to that of a standard golf glove). Also, applying tape to a golf glove to prevent the glove from slipping or to reduce wear is not a breach of Rule 14-3. However, if the tape is used solely to aid the player in gripping the club (e.g. it is used to bind two fingers together for no medical reason), the player is in breach of Rule 14-3 as such use of tape is the use of equipment in an abnormal manner. (Revised)

14-3/9

Player Putts with One Hand and Steadies Himself with Club Held in Other Hand

Q. A player, while putting with one hand, uses another club to lean on and steady himself. Is the use of the club in this manner considered to be use of equipment in an abnormal manner, contrary to Rule 14-3?

A. Yes. (Revised)

Related Decision:

• 17-1/5 Holding Flagstick With One Hand and Putting with Other Hand.

14-3/10.3

Use of Rod During Round for Alignment or as Swing Aid

Q. During a stipulated round, may a player use a rod or similar device to check his alignment or his swing plane?

A. No. The player would be using an artificial device or unusual equipment to assist him in his play in breach of Rule 14-3. Carrying the rod or similar device is not, of itself, a breach of a Rule. (Revised)

Related Decision:

• 8-2a/1 Club Placed on Ground to Align Feet.

14-3/10.5

Use of Stretching Devices

Q. Rule 14-3a prohibits a player, during a stipulated round, from using any artificial device or unusual equipment, or using any equipment in an abnormal manner, that “might assist him in making a stroke or in his play”. Would the use of a stretching device during a stipulated round be a breach of Rule 14-3?

A. During a stipulated round, it is permissible to use a device designed for stretching unless the device is designed specifically to be used in a golf swing and is used during a golf swing (see Decision 14-3/10). For example, the following stretching devices may be used:

- Items designed specifically for golf but not used in a golf swing (e.g. a bar to place across the shoulders);
- Items designed for general stretching (e.g. rubber tubing); and
- Items not originally designed for stretching (e.g. a section of pipe).
(Revised)

14-3/12.5

Bottled Drink Used as a Level

Q. A player places a bottled drink on the putting green in order to gauge the slope of the green. Is the player in breach of Rule 14-3?

A. Yes. The player is using equipment in an abnormal manner to assist him in his play contrary to Rule 14-3. However, if the placing of the bottle on the putting green was not for the purpose of gauging the slope, the player would not be in breach of Rule 14-3. (Revised)

14-3/16

Use of Electronic Devices

As provided in the Etiquette Section, players should ensure that any electronic device taken onto the course does not distract other players.

The use of an electronic device such as a mobile phone, hand-held computer, calculator, television or radio is not of itself a breach of Rule 14-3. For example, the following uses of an electronic device during a stipulated round are not a breach of the Rules:

- Using the device for matters unrelated to golf (e.g. to call home);
- Using the device to access information on advice-related matters that was produced prior to the start of the player's round (e.g. an electronic yardage book, swing tips);
- Using the device to access (but not interpret or process) playing information from previous rounds (e.g. driving distances, individual club yardages, etc.); or
- Using the device to obtain information related to the competition being played (e.g. the leader board or projected "cut").

However, the following are examples of uses of an electronic device during a stipulated round that might assist the player in his play and therefore are in breach of Rule 14-3:

- Using the device (e.g. a television or radio) to watch or listen to a broadcast of the competition being played;
- Using the device to ask for or give advice in breach of Rule 8-1 (e.g. calling a swing coach);
- Using the device to access information on advice-related matters that was not produced prior to the start of his round (e.g. analysis of strokes made during that round); or
- Using the device to interpret or process any playing information obtained from current or previous rounds (e.g. driving distances, individual club yardages, etc.) or to assist in calculating the effective distance between two points (i.e. distance after considering elevation changes, wind speed and/or direction or other environmental factors). (Revised)

14-3/18

Weather Information Accessed on Multi-Functional Device

Q. During a stipulated round, may a player access local weather information through an application or internet browser on a multi-functional device?

A. Yes. The prohibition in Rule 14-3 is only applicable to the specific act of gauging or measuring conditions that might affect a player's play (e.g. through use of a wind speed gauge). When accessing weather reports provided by a weather station through an application or internet browser, the player is not actively measuring or gauging the conditions. (Revised)

PLAYING MOVING BALL

14-5/1

Ball Moving During Backswing Struck While Still Moving

Q. A player's ball starts moving during his backswing and he strikes the ball while it is still moving. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty under Rule 14-5 because the ball began to move after the player had begun his backswing. However, if the player had caused the ball to move, he incurred a penalty stroke – Rule 18-2. (Revised)

15/7

Wrong Ball Played in Belief It Is Provisional or Second Ball

Q. A player, thinking his original ball may be lost or out of bounds, plays a provisional ball under Rule 27-2a. Before reaching the place where his original ball is likely to be, he plays a wrong ball, believing it is his provisional ball. He then finds his original ball in bounds and, correctly, abandons the provisional ball. Does the player incur a penalty under Rule 15-3 for playing a wrong ball, even though that wrong ball was played in mistake for a provisional ball which never became the ball in play?

A. Yes. Although a penalty incurred in play of a provisional ball is normally cancelled if the provisional ball has to be abandoned under Rule 27-2c (e.g. a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 for causing the provisional ball to move), this does not apply when the penalty is for playing a wrong ball.

The same ruling would apply if a competitor played a wrong ball in the belief that it was a second ball played under Rule 3-3 (Doubt as to Procedure in Stroke Play) or Rule 20-7c (Serious Breach of Playing from a Wrong Place in Stroke Play). However, in similar circumstances, there would have been no penalty under Rule 15-3b if the competitor had first holed out with his ball in play and then played a stroke with a wrong ball when proceeding under Rule 3-3 or 20-7c. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- 20-7c/5 Competitor Plays Second Ball Under Rule 20-7c; Clarification of "Penalty Strokes Incurred Solely by Playing the Ball Ruled Not to Count".

16/4

Hole-Liner Not Sunk Deep Enough

Q. A player discovers that a hole-liner is not sunk at least one inch below the surface as prescribed in the Definition of “Hole”. What should he do?

A. The player should request the Committee to adjust the hole-liner. If a member of the Committee is not readily available, the player may, without penalty, push down or otherwise move the hole-liner and repair any damage (e.g. raised turf around the hole) caused by the hole-liner being out of position or being moved. In view of the potential for damage, a player should adjust a hole-liner only as a last resort and should take great care in doing so. (Revised)

18/4

Television Evidence Shows Ball at Rest Changed Position But by Amount Not Reasonably Discernible to Naked Eye

Q. A player addresses his ball. He observes a slight motion of the ball but believes that it has only oscillated and has not left its original position. He therefore plays the ball as it lies. Later, the Committee becomes aware from television evidence that the ball had in fact left its position and come to rest in another place, although that change of position was such that it was not reasonably discernible to the naked eye at the time of the incident. What is the ruling?

A. The ball is deemed not to have moved and therefore there is no penalty under Rule 18-2. The Definition of “Moved” – when a ball “leaves its position and comes to rest in any other place” – does not contemplate movements of the ball that are only discernible through the use of high definition television or any other form of sophisticated technology.

When determining whether or not his ball at rest has moved, a player must make that judgment based on all the information readily available to him at the time, so that he can determine whether the ball must be replaced under Rule 18-2 or another applicable Rule. When the player’s ball has left its original position and come to rest in another place by an amount that was not reasonably discernible to the naked eye at the time, a player’s determination that the ball has not moved will be deemed to be conclusive, even if that determination is later shown to be incorrect through the use of sophisticated technology.

On the other hand, if the Committee determines, based on all of the evidence it has available, that the ball changed its position by an amount that was reasonably discernible to the naked eye at the time, the ball is deemed to have moved. As the player did not replace the ball, he incurs a penalty under the applicable Rule and Rule 20-7c for playing from a wrong place.

These principles apply to any review of technological evidence by the Committee, whether before the player makes his next stroke or any time thereafter. These principles also apply in a situation in which the player made no determination whether or not his ball at rest moved (e.g. because he had walked away from his ball after addressing it, was not looking at his ball, or otherwise did not observe any motion of the ball or have any reason to believe that his ball might have moved).

Before determining whether his ball has moved, it is advisable for the player to obtain information from nearby witnesses to the incident and to seek guidance from a referee if one is immediately available. (Revised)

18-2/1

Player Who Misses Tee Shot Tees Ball Lower Before Making Next Stroke

Q. A player playing from the teeing ground misses the ball completely. He pushes his tee further into the ground and plays. What is the ruling?

A. When the player made a stroke, the ball was in play (see Definition of “Ball in Play”). By pushing the tee further into the ground, he moved the ball and incurred a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and was required to replace it. However, as the player made his next stroke from within the teeing ground (Rule 20-5), he played under penalty of stroke and distance (see Rule 27-1a) and, therefore, the penalty under Rule 18-2 does not apply. (Revised)

18-2/2

Ball Falling Off Tee When Stroke Just Touches It Is Picked Up and Re-Teed

Q. A player making his first stroke on a hole just touched the ball and it fell off the tee. He picked up the ball, re-teeed it and played out the hole. What is the ruling?

A. When the player made a stroke, the ball was in play (see Definition of “Ball in Play”). When he lifted the ball, he incurred a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and was required to replace it. However, as the player made his next stroke from within the teeing ground (Rule 20-5), he played a ball under penalty of stroke and distance (see Rule 27-1a) and, therefore, the penalty under Rule 18-2 does not apply. (Revised)

Decisions related to 18-2/1 and 18-2/2:

- 10-2c/1 Ball Played Out of Turn from Tee Abandoned and Another Ball Played in Proper Order.
- 18-2/11 Tee Shot Wrongly Thought to Be Out of Bounds Lifted; Competitor Plays Another Ball from Tee.
- 27-2b/10 Provisional Ball Lifted Subsequently Becomes Ball in Play; Competitor Then Plays from Wrong Place.
- 29-1/9 Both Player and Partner Drive at Same Tee in Foursome Play.

18-2/11

Tee Shot Wrongly Thought to Be Out of Bounds Lifted; Competitor Plays Another Ball from Tee

Q. In stroke play, a competitor hits his tee shot into a practice area. Thinking that the ball is out of bounds, he lifts it and plays another ball from the tee. He then discovers that the practice area is not out of bounds. What is the ruling?

A. When the player lifted his ball in play, he incurred a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and was required to replace it. However, when the player made a stroke from where the previous stroke was made (Rule 20-5), he played a ball under penalty of stroke and distance (see Rule 27-1a) and, therefore, the penalty under Rule 18-2 does not apply. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 10-2c/1 Ball Played Out of Turn from Tee Abandoned and Another Ball Played in Proper Order.
- 18-2/1 Player Who Misses Tee Shot Tees Ball Lower Before Making Next Stroke.
- 18-2/2 Ball Falling Off Tee When Stroke Just Touches It Is Picked Up and Re-Teed.
- 27-2b/10 Provisional Ball Lifted Subsequently Becomes Ball in Play; Competitor Then Plays from Wrong Place (by returning to the teeing ground and playing it).
- 29-1/9 Both Player and Partner Drive at Same Tee in Foursome Play.

18-2/27

Player Wishes to Dislodge Ball in Tree and Proceed Under Unplayable Ball Rule

Q. A player who knows or believes that his ball is lodged high in a tree wishes to dislodge it by shaking the tree or throwing a club so that he can identify it and proceed by deeming his ball unplayable under Rule 28. Is this permissible?

A. Yes. However, to avoid a penalty under Rule 18-2, before any movement of the ball occurs, the player must announce that he intends to proceed under the unplayable ball Rule or it must be reasonable to assume from his actions that he intends to do so. (Revised)

18-2/28

Ball Dislodged from Tree; Player Had No Intention to Proceed Under Unplayable Ball Rule

Q. A player could not find his ball. Believing the ball might be lodged in a tree, he shook the tree and his ball fell to the ground. He played the ball from where it came to rest. What is the ruling?

A. As the player did not announce that he intended to proceed under the unplayable ball Rule and it was not reasonable to assume from his actions that he intended to do so, he incurred one penalty stroke under Rule 18-2 for moving his ball. He should have replaced the ball. Since he did not do so, in match play he lost the hole. In stroke play, he incurred a total penalty of two strokes, unless it was a serious breach (see Rule 18 penalty statement and Rule 20-7c).

Having incurred the one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2, the player could have elected to proceed directly under the unplayable ball Rule, incurring an additional penalty stroke under Rule 28, rather than replace the ball in the tree. (Revised)

18-2/29

Procedure for Player after Dislodging His Ball from Tree

Q. A player, believing his ball is lodged in a tree, shakes the tree and his ball falls to the ground. As provided in Decision 18-2/28, unless the player announced or it was reasonable to assume from his actions that he would proceed under the unplayable ball Rule if it was his ball, he incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and must replace his ball. However, how should the player proceed if he cannot replace his ball because:

- (1) the spot where it lay in the tree is not determinable, or
- (2) the ball fails to remain on the correct spot when replaced, or
- (3) the player cannot reach the spot where the ball lay?

A. Rules 20-3c and 20-3d would normally cover circumstances (1) and (2), but these Rules do not contemplate a situation such as the one described. Accordingly, in equity (Rule 1-4), in circumstances (1) and (2), the ball must be placed in the tree as near as possible to the spot from which it was moved. Alternatively, the player may elect to proceed directly under the unplayable ball Rule, incurring an additional penalty stroke under Rule 28.

In circumstance (3), the player must proceed under the unplayable ball Rule, incurring an additional penalty stroke under Rule 28. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- [14/7 Striking at Tree Branch to Move Ball Lodged Higher in Branch.](#)
- [18-1/9 Ball Lodged in Tree Knocked Down by Outside Agency.](#)

19-1/7

Ball Picked Up or Deflected by Dog After Stroke on Putting Green

Q. A player makes a stroke on the putting green and, while the ball is still in motion, it is picked up and carried away, or is deflected, by a dog. What is the ruling?

A. A dog is an animate outside agency, which is any outside agency capable of voluntary movement. Under Rule 19-1b, when a ball has been deflected or stopped by an animate outside agency (except a worm, insect or the like) and the stroke was made on the putting green, the stroke is cancelled and the ball must be replaced and replayed. If the ball is not immediately recoverable another ball may be substituted. (Revised)

Other Decisions related to Rule 19-1: See “Ball Deflected or Stopped: by outside agency” in the Index.

19-2/1.5

Ball Moves and Is Accidentally Stopped by Player’s Club; Player Removes Club and Ball Moves Away

Q. A player’s ball lies on a steep slope through the green. The player takes his stance but, fearing the ball might move, does not ground his club and does nothing to cause the ball to move. The ball rolls backwards and is stopped accidentally by the player’s club. The player then removes his club and the ball rolls farther down the slope. Is the player subject to the penalty of one stroke under Rule 19-2?

A. Yes, and the ball must be replaced on the spot at which it was stopped. A further penalty under Rule 18-2 (Ball at Rest Moved by Player) does not apply in the circumstances provided the player replaces the ball, as related acts have resulted in two Rules being breached – see Principle 4 in Decision 1-4/12. If the ball is not replaced before the player makes his next stroke, the failure to replace the ball is considered an unrelated act (see Principle 5 in Decision 1-4/12) and he loses the hole in match play or incurs an additional penalty of two strokes in stroke play under Rule 18-2, for a total penalty of three strokes. (Revised)

Decision related to 19-2/1 and 19-2/1.5:

- 18-2/6 Ball Moves After Address and Is Stopped by Player’s Club.

19-2/7

Ball Strikes Player’s Golf Bag and Then His Caddie

Q. A player’s ball strikes his golf bag lying on the ground and then bounces off it and hits his caddie. Is the penalty one stroke or two strokes?

A. One stroke — Rule 19-2. As a single act resulted in one Rule being breached more than once, a single penalty applies – see Principle 1 in Decision 1-4/12. (Revised)

19-2/10

Ball Stopped or Deflected by Rake Held by Player's Caddie

Q. A player's ball lies in a bunker. He plays, and his ball is accidentally stopped or deflected by a rake that is being held by his caddie. What is the ruling?

A. If a player's caddie is holding or carrying a rake, or the rake is leaning against his body, the rake is the equipment of the player – see Note 2 to the Definition of Equipment. Consequently, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke for a breach of Rule 19-2 and must play the ball as it lies. (Revised)

Other Decisions related to Rule 19-2: See “Ball Deflected or Stopped: by equipment of player or partner”, “Ball Deflected or Stopped: by player or partner”, and “Ball Deflected or Stopped: by player's own caddie” in the Index.

19-5/1.5

Ball Lifted and Replaced; Ball Then Rolls and Strikes Ball on Putting Green

Q. In stroke play, after a stroke from the putting green, a competitor marks the position of and lifts his ball from the putting green. After he replaces the ball at rest, and without doing anything to cause it to move, the ball rolls and strikes his fellow-competitor's ball, which was lying on the putting green. Is the player in breach of Rule 19-5a?

A. No. The competitor incurs no penalty and must play the ball from its new position. After the competitor had lifted and replaced his ball, any subsequent movement is not considered to be “after a stroke” for the purposes of Rule 19-5a. (Revised)

20-1/15.5

Lie Altered By Act of Marking Position of Ball

Q. As an incidental result of a player marking the position of his ball, there is a change in the lie of the ball, for example, from grass being depressed by the weight of the ball-marker, or grains of sand being moved in the placement or removal of a ball-marker. Is the player subject to penalty or required to restore the lie he had before marking the position of the ball?

A. No. If the act of placing a ball-marker improves the lie of the ball, there is no penalty under Rule 13-2 provided the improvement did not exceed what was incidental to the marking of the ball. The player must accept any such change in the lie, whether the lie is improved or worsened, and he would be in breach of Rule 13-2 if he were to create a potential advantage by attempting to restore the lie (see Decision 13-2/0.5). (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 13-2/15 Area of Intended Swing Improved by Removing Immovable Obstruction.
- 13-2/15.5 Position of Ball Worsened When Obstruction Removed; Player Replaces Obstruction.

20-1/16

Method Used to Mark Position of Ball

Q. The Note to Rule 20-1 provides that “the position of a ball to be lifted should be marked by placing a ball-marker, a small coin or other similar object immediately behind the ball.” Is a player penalised if he uses an object that is not similar to a ball-marker or small coin to mark the position of his ball?

A. No. The provision in the Note to Rule 20-1 is a recommendation of best practice, but there is no penalty for failing to act in accordance with the Note.

Examples of methods of marking the position of a ball that are not recommended, but are permissible, are as follows:

- placing the toe of a club at the side of, or behind, the ball;
- using a tee;
- using a loose impediment;
- scratching a line, provided the putting green is not tested (Rule 16-1d) and a line of putt is not indicated (Rule 8-2b). As this practice may cause damage to the putting green, it is discouraged.

However, under Rule 20-1 it is necessary to physically mark the position of the ball. Reference to an existing mark on the ground does not constitute

marking the position of a ball. For example, it is not permissible to mark the position with reference to a blemish on the putting green.

When moving a ball or ball-marker to the side to prevent it from interfering with another player's stance or stroke, the player may measure from the side of the ball or ball-marker. In order to accurately replace the ball on the spot from which it was lifted, the steps used to move the ball or ball-marker to the side should be reversed. (Revised)

20-2a/4

Ball Dropped in Improper Manner Moves When Addressed; Player Then Lifts Ball and Drops It in Proper Manner

Q. A player drops his ball other than in the manner prescribed in Rule 20-2a. He addresses the ball and causes it to move. He then is advised that he dropped his ball improperly. So, as permitted by Rule 20-6, he lifts the ball, drops it properly and plays. According to Rule 20-6, the player incurs no penalty for the improper drop. Does he incur a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2 for causing the ball to move, even though the ball was subsequently lifted and re-dropped?

A. Yes. The ball was in play when it was first dropped, even though it was dropped in an improper manner (Rule 20-4). When the player caused the ball to move, the penalty prescribed in Rule 18-2 was applicable. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- 29/4 Dropping Ball in Foursome Competition.

BALL FAILS TO COME TO REST ON SPOT

20-3d/1

Placed Ball Rolls into Hole

Q. A replaces his ball on the putting green three feet from the hole. Without doing anything to cause the ball to move, it rolls into the hole. Should the ball be replaced or is A deemed to have holed out with his previous stroke?

A. The answer depends on whether the ball, when replaced, came to rest on the spot on which it was placed before it started rolling. If it did, A is deemed to have holed out with his previous stroke. If not, A is required to replace the ball (Rule 20-3d). However, if the ball had been overhanging the hole when it was lifted, the provisions of Rule 16-2 would override those of Rule 20-3d. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 18-1/12 Ball Replaced and at Rest Is Thereafter Moved by Wind.
- 18-2/7 Ball Moved by Wind Replaced.
- 20-4/1 Ball Replaced on Putting Green But Ball-Marker Not Removed; Ball Then Moves.

20-3d/3

Ball in Rough Moves Downward When Addressed; Ball Will Not Remain at Rest When Replaced

Q. A player's ball is sitting up in the rough about three inches above the ground. He addresses the ball, which causes it to move downward about two inches and it comes to rest at Point X. The player attempts to replace the ball as required by Rule 18-2, but the ball falls downward to Point X. Under Rule 20-3d, he again attempts to replace the ball, with the same result. The player must now place the ball at the nearest spot not nearer the hole where it can be placed at rest – Rule 20-3d.

If the nearest spot where the ball will remain at rest is Point X, must the player place the ball there, even though that point is vertically below the original lie?

A. Yes. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- [18/1 Ball Moves Vertically Downward.](#)

23-1/7

Loose Impediment in Hazard Moved in Process of Ball Being Lifted

Q. A loose impediment in a hazard close to a player's ball in the same hazard is moved in the process of the player lifting his ball under a Rule that requires him to replace the ball. Is the player required to replace the loose impediment before making his next stroke?

A. Yes. If he fails to do so, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play on the basis that failing to do so, in effect, circumvents Rule 13-4c. (Revised)

23-1/8

Removal of Loose Impediments Likely to Cause Ball to Move; Loose Impediments Removed Before Ball Replaced

Q. A player's ball lies through the green against a detached tree branch and on a bed of pine needles. It appears likely that the ball will move if the player removes either the tree branch or the pine needles.

The player then lifts the ball, or the ball is moved, under a Rule that requires it to be replaced. Before replacing the ball on the spot from which it was lifted or moved, the player removes the tree branch or the pine needles on which his ball lay. Is this permissible?

A. No. Under Rule 18-2, through the green a player incurs a penalty if he causes his ball to move as a result of removing a loose impediment. It would circumvent this Rule if, before a moved or lifted ball was replaced on the spot from which it was lifted or moved, it was permissible to remove loose impediments the removal of which otherwise would likely have caused the ball to move. Therefore, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player should be penalised one stroke.

In such circumstances, if a player wishes to remove the loose impediments, he should do so either before lifting the ball or after replacing the moved or lifted ball. If his ball then moves as a result of removing the loose impediments, the player incurs a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2 and must replace the ball.

This Decision does not apply where the player must proceed by dropping the ball under Rule 20-3c because it is impossible to determine the spot on which the ball is to be replaced; in that situation, Decision 23-1/6 applies and the player is permitted to remove any loose impediments from the area in which he is preparing to drop his ball as near as possible to where it lay.
(Revised)

Decisions related to 23-1/7 and 23-1/8:

- 1-4/5 Removal of Obstruction in Hazard Would Move Loose Impediment.
- 13-4/16 Removal of Loose Impediment in Water Hazard Covering Wrong Ball.
- 13-4/35.7 Player Deems Ball Unplayable in Bunker, Lifts Ball and Then Removes Loose Impediment from Bunker.

23-1/12

After Ball Addressed on Putting Green Ball Moved in Removal of Loose Impediment

Q. After a player addresses his ball on the putting green, an insect alights on the ball. The player bends over without moving his feet and, in attempting to brush the insect off the ball, moves the ball several inches. Is the player subject to a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2?

A. No. An insect is a loose impediment – see Definition of “Loose Impediments” and Decision 23-1/5.

Under Rule 23-1, a player incurs no penalty if a ball on the putting green moves while he is in the process of removing a loose impediment. Rule 23-1 overrides Rule 18-2 in this case. (Revised)

Related Decisions:

- 13-4/16.5 Flying Insect in Water Hazard.
- 20-1/12 Ball-Marker Moved Accidentally By Player After Having Moved Loose Impediments.
- 23-1/5 Removal of Insect on Ball.

EMBEDDED BALL

25-2/0.5

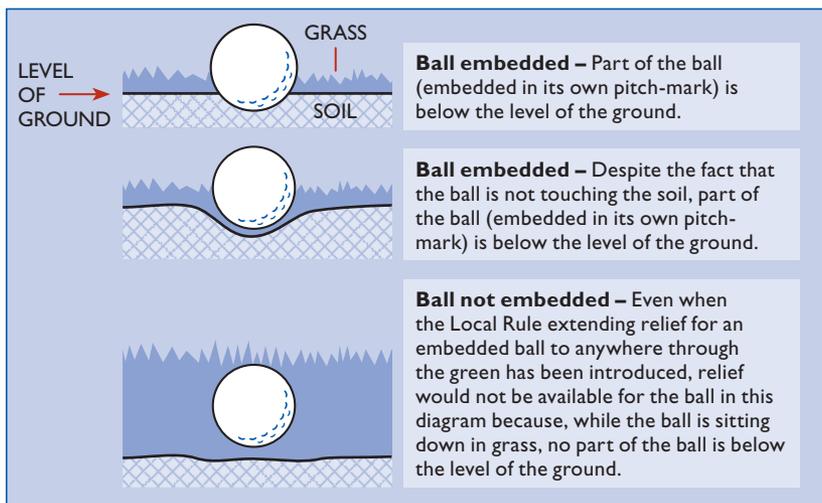
When Ball Embedded in Ground

A ball is deemed to be embedded in the ground only if:

- the impact of the ball landing has created a pitch-mark in the ground,
- the ball is in its own pitch-mark, and
- part of the ball is below the level of the ground.

Provided that these three requirements are met, a ball does not necessarily have to touch the soil to be considered embedded (e.g. grass, loose impediments or the like may intervene between the ball and the soil).

Any doubt as to whether a ball is embedded should be resolved against the player.



26-1/10

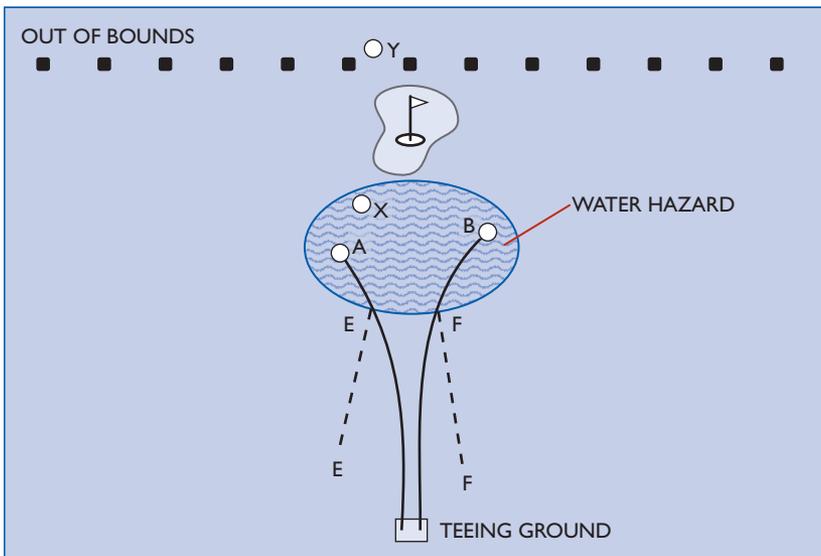
Placing Ball on Bank of Water Hazard Instead of Dropping to Prevent Ball Rolling into Water

Q. A player's ball lies in a playable position on the bank of a water hazard. The player hits the ball out of bounds. If he proceeds under Rule 27-1 and drops a ball on the bank as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played, the ball will be likely to roll into deep water. May he place the ball in such circumstances, rather than drop it?

A. No. However, the player is not obliged to drop a ball within the hazard in accordance with Rule 27-1. He may take the penalty stroke provided in Rule 27-1 and then, under an additional penalty of one stroke, put a ball into play outside the hazard in accordance with either Rule 26-2b(i) or 26-2b(ii). (Revised)

26-2/1

Explanation of Options Under Rules 26-2a and 26-2b



Regarding the diagram, A and B play from the tee. A's ball comes to rest in the water hazard at Point A. B's ball comes to rest at Point B. Both A and B elect to play from the hazard. A fails to get out of the hazard. He plays to Point X, and his ball is not playable. B plays to Point Y, which is out of bounds.

Under penalty of one stroke, A may:

- drop a ball at Point A and play again from there, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(ii)); or
- drop a ball anywhere on dotted line E–E and play from there, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(ii)); or
- play another ball from the tee, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(i)).

If A drops a ball at Point A and the ball comes to rest at a spot from which he judges he cannot play, he may, adding an additional penalty of one stroke, either drop a ball anywhere on the dotted line E–E or play another ball from the tee, playing 5.

B, after taking the penalty stroke prescribed in Rule 27-1, may drop a ball at Point B and play again from there, playing 4 (Rule 26-2b).

Alternatively, B, after taking the penalty stroke prescribed in Rule 27-1, may drop a ball at Point B and elect not to play that ball or elect not to drop a ball at Point B. In either case, he shall then:

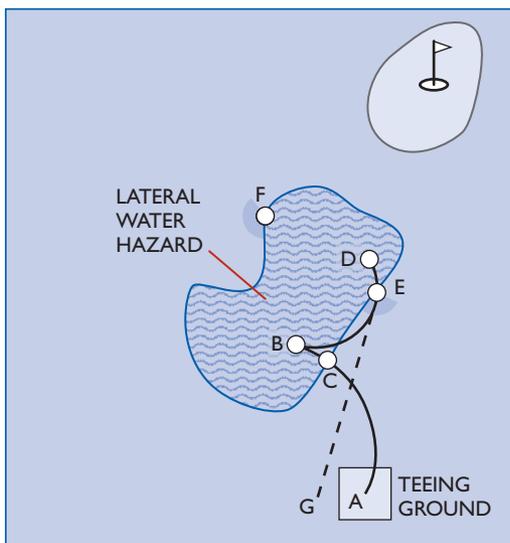
- under an additional penalty of one stroke, drop a ball anywhere on dotted line F–F and play from there, playing 5 (Rule 26-2b(ii)); or
- under an additional penalty of one stroke, play another ball from the tee, playing 5 (Rule 26-2b(i)). (Revised)

26-2/2

Ball Played from Within Hazard Comes to Rest in Same Hazard After Exiting Hazard

Q. In the diagram, a player has played a ball from Point A (the teeing ground) into the lateral water hazard at Point B. The ball last crossed the margin of the hazard at Point C.

The player elects to play the ball from the hazard and he succeeds in getting his ball out of the hazard, but it re-enters the hazard at Point E. The ball comes to rest at Point D and it is not playable. What are the player's options?



A. The player may under penalty of one stroke:

- drop a ball at Point B and play again from there, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(ii)); or
- drop a ball anywhere on dotted line E–G and play from there, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(ii)); or
- drop a ball within two club-lengths of and not nearer the hole than Point E, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(ii)); or
- drop a ball within two club-lengths of and not nearer the hole than Point F, playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(ii)); or
- play another ball from Point A (the teeing ground), playing 4 (Rule 26-2a(i)).

Point E is the reference point for proceeding under Rule 26-1b or 26-1c as it is the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the water hazard.

If the player drops a ball at Point B and the ball comes to rest at a spot from which he judges he cannot play, he may, adding an additional penalty of one stroke, either drop a ball anywhere on the dotted line E–G, drop a ball within two club-lengths of and not nearer the hole than Points E or F, or play another ball from Point A (the teeing ground), playing 5. (Revised)

PROVISIONAL BALL: PROCEDURE

27-2a/1

Announcement of Provisional Ball

Q. A player hits his ball into an area where it may be lost outside a water hazard or out of bounds. The player then drops another ball and plays it. The player intends the dropped ball to be a provisional ball, but he does not announce to his opponent, marker or fellow-competitor that he is “playing a provisional ball”. In such a situation, can a player’s actions constitute announcement that he is playing a provisional ball?

A. No. Rule 27-2a specifically provides that the player must announce to his opponent, marker or a fellow-competitor that he intends to play a provisional ball.

The player’s statement must specifically mention the words “provisional ball” or must make it clear that he is proceeding under Rule 27-2a. Therefore, a player who says nothing has put another ball into play.

The following are examples of statements that do not satisfy the requirement of announcing a provisional ball:

- (a) “That might be lost. I am going to re-load.”
- (b) “That might be out of here.”
- (c) “I’d better hit another one.”
- (d) “I will never find that one. I’ll play another.” (Revised)

29-1/5

Order of Play If Player Accidentally Causes Ball to Move

Q. In a foursome match, a player accidentally causes his ball to move and incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2. Does the player or his partner play the next stroke?

A. The player must play the next stroke. Penalty strokes do not affect the order of play (Rule 29-1). (Revised)

30/2.5

Player Touches Putting Green in Pointing Out Line of Putt for Partner and Touches Own Line of Putt

Q. In a four-ball match, A and B are partners and their balls lie on the putting green. A touches the green in pointing out B’s line of putt. The spot which A touches is also on his (A’s) line of putt. What is the ruling?

A. B is disqualified for the hole under Rule 8-2b.

A is disqualified for the hole under Rule 16-1a because he touched his line of putt; the fact that it was in the act of pointing out the line of putt for his partner is irrelevant. (Revised)

FOUR-BALL STROKE PLAY: DISQUALIFICATION PENALTIES

31-7a/1

Competitor Records Score for Hole Not Completed

Q. A and B are partners in four-ball stroke play. At the 10th hole, A picks up and B holes out in 5 strokes. The marker records a score of 6 for A and a score of 5 for B. The score card is returned with these scores recorded. Is any penalty incurred because A-B returned a score for A at a hole which A did not complete?

A. No. Rule 31-7a provides that a side is only in breach of Rule 6-6d, for which the penalty is disqualification of the side, when the recorded score of the partner whose score is to count is lower than actually taken. The score recorded for A was not A-B's lower score for the 10th hole. Accordingly, no penalty is applicable. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- [32-2a/1 Four-Ball Stableford Competition on Handicap Basis; Side's Scores Transposed at a Hole But Not to Side's Advantage.](#)

33-7/4

Modifying Penalty for Returning Wrong Score

Q. A marker inadvertently recorded a 4 for a competitor on a hole at which the competitor's score was actually 5. The competitor returned his score card to the Committee without discovering the error.

Later, the competitor discovered the error while observing the scoreboard. He immediately reported the error to the Committee. While the Exception to Rule 6-6d does not apply to the competitor, would it be appropriate in such circumstances to invoke Rule 33-7 and waive or modify the disqualification penalty prescribed in Rule 6-6d?

A. No. A penalty of disqualification may be waived or modified only in exceptional circumstances. (Revised)

34-1b/7

Wrong Score in Qualifying Round Discovered During Match Play

Q. On completion of the stroke play qualifying round for a match play competition, a player failed to include in his score for a hole a penalty he knew he had incurred. After the player had advanced in the match play phase, the error was discovered. What should be done?

A. As the player knew he had incurred the penalty prior to returning his score card, he is disqualified. (Revised)

34-1b/8

Player Who Has Advanced to Match Play is Disqualified for Wrong Score in Qualifying Round

Q. In a competition where match play follows stroke play qualifying, the Committee discovers that player A, who has advanced to match play, has made a scoring error resulting in disqualification. What is the proper procedure for the Committee with respect to the match play competition?

A. The Committee must proceed in accordance with equity (Rule 1-4). Depending on the circumstances, the Committee's options include:

1. If the disqualification was discovered before A's first match:
 - a. If time permits, reproduce the match play draw; or
 - b. Replace A with the player who is now judged to be the final qualifier; or
2. If the disqualification was discovered while A was playing his first match:
 - a. Declare his opponent the winner by default; or
 - b. Cancel all matches, produce a new match play draw, and re-start the match play competition; or
3. Consider the disqualification penalty applicable only from the time of its discovery, thus giving A's next opponent a win by default; or
4. Reinstatement of the player last eliminated by A; or
5. Require all players eliminated by A in match play to play off for his position; or
6. If the disqualification penalty is discovered after A has won the match play competition, cancel the competition. (Revised)

34-3/1

Correction of Incorrect Ruling in Stroke Play

Q. During the first round of a 36-hole stroke play competition, a competitor plays a wrong ball from a bunker at the 6th hole and the ball comes to rest on the green. He then realises that he has played a wrong ball and corrects his mistake. The competitor reports the facts to the Committee before returning his card and is incorrectly advised that he has incurred no penalty since the wrong ball was played from a hazard.

During the second round the Committee realises that it made a mistake and retrospectively adds to the competitor's first-round score two penalty strokes at the 6th hole.

The competitor objects on the ground that the Committee reached a decision on the matter the previous day and that, as Rule 34-3 states that the Committee's decision is final, it cannot now impose a penalty.

Was the Committee's procedure correct?

A. Yes. Under Rule 34-3, a Committee's decision is final in that the competitor has no right to appeal. However, Rule 34-3 does not prevent a Committee from correcting an incorrect ruling and imposing or rescinding a penalty provided that no penalty is imposed or rescinded after the competition is closed, except in the circumstances set forth in Rule 34-1b. (Revised)

Related Decision:

- [34-1b/1 Omission of Penalty Stroke When Score Returned.](#)

34-3/7

Referee Determines Player Did Not Cause Ball to Move; Committee Subsequently Changes Ruling

Q. A player's ball in play moves and he is unsure whether he caused it to move in breach of Rule 18-2. The player asks for a ruling from a referee. Based on the evidence, the referee determines that the player did not cause the ball to move and instructs the player to play the ball as it lies without penalty. After the player plays, the Committee assesses the same evidence or additional evidence that was not available at the time and determines that the player had caused the ball to move. What is the ruling?

A. Rule 34-3 does not prevent a Committee from changing a ruling (see Decision 34-3/1). As the player caused the ball to move, he was required to replace the ball with a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2. When he failed to do so, he played from a wrong place. However, as he did so at the instruction of a referee, he does not incur the general penalty under Rule 18 for playing from a wrong place. Nevertheless, he does incur the penalty stroke under Rule 18-2 as he caused the ball to move before the ruling from the referee. The player must continue with the ball played from the wrong place. (Revised)

34-3/8

Player Proceeds on Basis of Ruling; Player's Version of Facts Subsequently Found to Be Incorrect

Q. A player's ball in play moves, and the player asks for a ruling from a referee. When asked, the player informs the referee that he had not caused the ball to move. The referee instructs the player to play the ball from its new location without penalty. After the player plays, the referee becomes aware that the player had in fact caused the ball to move. What is the ruling?

A. As the player caused the ball to move, he was required to replace the ball with a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2. When he failed to do so, he played from a wrong place and loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play under Rule 18.

The player must continue with the ball played from the wrong place except that, in stroke play, if a serious breach is involved and the player has not yet played from the next teeing ground or, in the case of the last hole of the round, before the player leaves the putting green, the referee must require the player to cancel the stroke made with the ball from the wrong place and any subsequent strokes and play from the original location of the ball.

The imposition of the general penalty in this situation is different from the ruling in Decision 34-3/7 in that, in this case, the player provided the incorrect information that led to the incorrect ruling. The player is responsible for providing the correct facts to the referee and is subject to penalty under the applicable Rule if his incorrect version of the facts led to his playing from a wrong place. (Revised)

34-3/9

Resolution of Questions of Fact; Referee and Committee Responsibility

Resolving questions of fact is among the most difficult actions required of a referee, or the Committee as a whole. For example, these situations include a broad array of incidents such as determining whether a player caused a ball to move (Decision 18-2/0.5), whether a player played from outside the teeing ground (Decision 34-3/4), whether a stroke was made (Decision 14/1.5), the hole at which a wrong ball was played (Decision 15-1/3) and the state of a match (Decision 34-3/5).

In all situations involving questions of fact, resolution of the doubt must be made in light of all the relevant circumstances and evaluation of the weight of the evidence, including the balance of probabilities where applicable (Decision 15-1/3). When the Committee is unable to determine the facts to its satisfaction, it must resolve the matter in the fairest way (Decision 34-3/5).

Testimony of the players involved is important and must be given due consideration. In some situations where the facts are not decisive, the doubt should be resolved in favour of the player (Decisions 15-1/2 and 19-1/4.1); in others, the doubt should be resolved against the player (Decision 13-4/35.5 and 21/3). There is no hard-and-fast rule for evaluating the testimony of the players or for assigning the weight to be given to such testimony and each situation must be treated on its own merits. The proper action depends on the circumstances in each case and must be left to the judgment of the referee, or the Committee as a whole.

Testimony of those who are not a part of the competition, including spectators, must be accepted and evaluated (Decision 27/12). It is also appropriate to use television footage and the like to assist in resolving doubt.

It is important that any questions of fact be resolved in a timely manner such that the competition may proceed in an orderly way. Thus, the referee may be limited to evaluating the evidence available to him in a timely manner. Any such ruling is always subject to further review by the referee, or Committee as a whole as additional evidence becomes available.

If a judgment is made by a referee, the player is entitled to proceed on the basis of that ruling whether it is an interpretation of the Rules of Golf (Decision 34-3/1.5) or a resolution of a question of fact (Decision 34-3/7). In situations arising in both circumstances, if the ruling is found to be incorrect, the Committee may have the authority to make a correction (Decisions 34-3/1 and 34-3/7). However, in all circumstances, including both match play and stroke play, the referee or Committee is limited in its ability to make corrections by the guidance contained in Decisions 34-2/5, 34-2/6, 34-2/7, 34-3/3 and 34-3/3.3. (Revised)