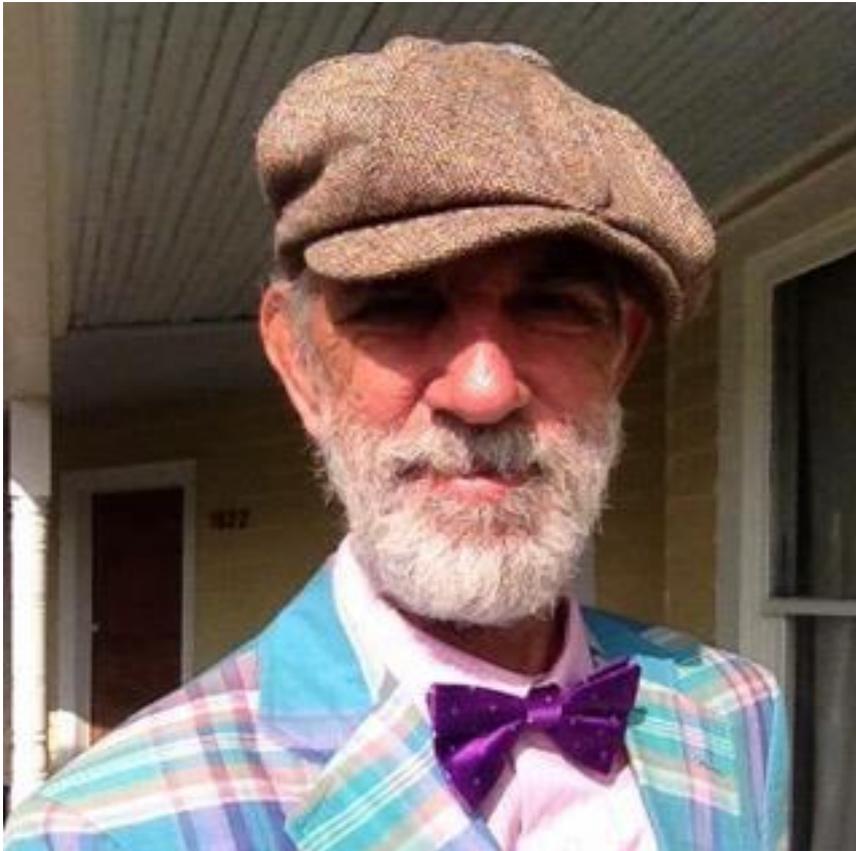


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Objet: New Rules on the Green for 2019
New Rules on the Green for 2019



Geoff Mangum

The R&A and the USGA — apparently acting in panic mode as the game of golf continues to shrivel from its “golden age” in the 1970s and 1980s — have acted to simplify the Rules of Golf to shed some of the more ridiculous, picky technicalities that have accrued over the decades to more align the Rules with how amateurs actually play the game and to pick up the pace of play. Much more can and should be done to simplify the game’s Rules by eliminating technicalities without undermining the vital role of skill.

<http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rules-modernization/major-changes/major-changes.html>

Below is a summary of the nine major changes that affect play on the green.

1. Touching green
2. Marking ball
3. Repairing damage
4. Flagstick in the hole
5. Ball moves
6. Ball deflected
7. Pace of play
8. Damaged clubs
9. Caddie alignment

Plus

1. Missed opportunities — anchoring and caddie books
1. Touching green

Putting green

Player touches the line of putt or touches the putting green in pointing out a target
New rule: No penalty, so long as doing so does not improve the conditions for the player's stroke.

Current rule: Loss of hole/2-stroke penalty (with exceptions).

2019 Rule: The prohibition of touching the line of play on the putting green will be eliminated:

- There will no longer be a penalty for merely touching the line of play on the putting green (the term "line of play" will apply everywhere on the course including the putting green, and the term "line of putt" will no longer be used).

- But the player will still be subject to the prohibition on improving his or her line of play on the putting green (see Rule 8.1a, as limited by 8.1b).

Reasons for Change:

No advantage is gained if a player or his or her caddie merely touches the surface of the putting green on the line where the ball will be played.

Over time, the prohibition on touching the line of putt has become subject to many exceptions:

- Current Rule 16-1a lists seven different situations in which a player is allowed to touch the line of putt.

The current prohibition is difficult to administer and penalties are not often applied; and those penalties that are applied may be perceived as serving little or no purpose, such as when a caddie accidentally touches the line of putt with the flagstick.

Still no “testing” green:

R13.1

e. No Deliberate Testing of Greens

During a round and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, a player must not deliberately take either of these actions to test the putting green or a wrong green:

- Rub the surface, or
- Roll a ball.

Exception – Testing Greens When between Two Holes: Between two holes, a player may rub the surface or roll a ball on the putting green of the hole just completed and on any practice green (see Rule 5.5b).

Penalty for Testing the Putting Green or a Wrong Green in Breach of Rule 13.1e:
General Penalty.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

See Committee Procedures, Section 8; Model Local Rule I-2 (the Committee may adopt a Local Rule prohibiting a player from rolling a ball on the putting green of the hole just completed.)

1. Marking ball

Advice and help

Caddie lifts and replaces the player's ball on the putting green

New rule: A caddie may lift and replace the player's ball on the putting green without the player's specific authorization to do so.

Current rule: 1-stroke penalty if done without the player's specific authorization.

2019 Rule: Under Rule 14.1b:

- The player's caddie will be allowed to mark and lift the player's ball on the putting green any time the player is allowed to do so, without needing authorization.
- The caddie will continue to be allowed to replace the player's ball only if the caddie was the one who had lifted or moved the ball.

Reasons for Change:

There is no compelling reason to prohibit a caddie from performing these purely mechanical acts when the player's ball is on the putting green.

In many places, it is common practice for caddies to mark, lift, clean and replace the player's ball when it first comes to rest on the putting green without authorization from the player, even though this is not permitted under the current Rules.

Giving the caddie this authority is consistent with the limited role of a caddie.

1. Repairing damage

MARCH 12, 2018

Putting green

Repairing damage on the putting green

New rule: A player may repair almost any damage (including spike marks and animal damage but not including natural imperfections) on the putting green.

Current rule: A player may only repair ball-marks or old hole plugs on the putting green.

2019 Rule: Rule 13.1c(2) allows repair of almost any damage on the green:

- “Damage on the putting green” will be defined to include all types of damage (such as ball-marks, shoe damage, indentations from a club or flagstick, animal damage, etc.), except aeration holes, natural surface imperfections or natural wear of the hole.

Reasons for Change:

Because putting greens are specially prepared for playing the ball along the ground, the Rules allow the player to do things on the green that are not allowed anywhere else:

- The player may mark, lift and clean a ball on the green at any time, remove sand and loose soil on the green and repair old hole plugs and ball-marks on the green.
- Given this philosophy of allowing players to try to have a smooth surface for rolling the ball, there is no conceptual reason for prohibiting repair of other types of damage (whether made by players, animals, maintenance staff, etc.).

This Rule change will eliminate the frequent questions among players and referees about whether a particular area of damage on the green is a ball-mark that may be repaired or is a shoe mark or other damage that must not be repaired.

The concern has been noted that allowing repair of all damage on the putting green could slow down play if players try to repair too many areas; but we believe this is unlikely to be true for most players and that the Rule against unreasonable delay (as well as a Committee’s pace of play policy) can be used to address situations where a player seeks to make excessive repairs.

R13.1

c. Improvements Allowed on Putting Green

During a round and while play is stopped under Rule 5.7a, a player may take these two actions on the putting green, no matter whether the ball is on or off the putting green:

(1) Removal of Sand and Loose Soil. Sand and loose soil on the putting green (but not anywhere else on the course) may be removed without penalty.

(2) Repair of Damage. A player may repair damage on the putting green without penalty by taking reasonable actions to restore the putting green as nearly as possible to its original condition, but only:

- By using his or her hand, foot or other part of the body or a normal ball-mark repair tool, tee, club or similar item of normal equipment, and
- Without unreasonably delaying play (see Rule 5.6a).

But if the player improves the putting green by taking actions that exceed what is reasonable to restore the putting green to its original condition (such as by creating a pathway to the hole or by using an object that is not allowed), the player gets the general penalty for breach of Rule 8.1a.

“Damage on the putting green” means any damage caused by a person or outside influence, such as:

- Ball marks, shoe damage (such as spike marks) and scrapes or indentations caused by equipment or a flagstick,
- Old hole plugs, turf plugs, seams of cut turf and scrapes or indentations from maintenance tools or vehicles,
- Animal tracks or hoof indentations, and
- Embedded objects (such as a stone, acorn or tee).

But “damage on the putting green” does not include any damage or conditions that result from:

- Normal practices for maintaining the overall condition of the putting green (such as aeration holes and grooves from vertical mowing),
- Irrigation or rain or other natural forces,
- Natural surface imperfections (such as weeds or areas of bare, diseased or uneven
- Natural wear of the hole.

1. Flagstick in hole

Putting green

Putting with an unattended flagstick left in the hole

New rule: No penalty if a ball played from the putting green (or anywhere else) hits the unattended flagstick in hole.

Current rule: Loss of hole/2-stroke penalty if the ball is played from the putting green and hits the unattended flagstick in hole.

2019 Rule: Under Rule 13.2a(2):

- There will no longer be a penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits a flagstick left in the hole.
- Players will not be required to putt with the flagstick in the hole; rather, they will continue to have the choice to have it removed (which includes having someone attend the flagstick and remove it after the ball is played).

Reasons for Change:

Allowing a player to putt with the flagstick in the hole without fear of penalty should generally help speed up play.

When the players do not have caddies, the current Rule can result in considerable delay.

On balance it is expected that there should be no advantage in being able to putt with the unattended flagstick in the hole:

- In some cases, the ball may strike the flagstick and bounce out of the hole when it might otherwise have been holed, and
- In other cases, the ball may hit the flagstick and finish in the hole when it might otherwise have missed.

The actual new Rule is complicated. The player decides before the stroke whether the flagstick is in or out and cannot change this after the stroke is played and the ball

on the way. But apparently the caddie may “tend” the flagstick and unseat it from the cup-liner hole and leave the flagstick “in” after the stroke is played, provided the caddie keeps the flagstick “centered”. Usually, when caddies tend the flagstick preparatory to removing the flagstick after the stroke is made but before the ball could (illegally) strike the flagstick, the caddie unseated the flagstick to avoid it getting stuck and also leaned the stick (usually) back to the rim of the hole. Under the new rule, if the decision is to leave the flagstick in, the caddie is “for some unknown reason” allowed to unseat the flagstick but must keep it centered AND cannot “help” stop the putted ball by leaning the flagstick in the way of the ball.

This is pretty stupid. If the decision is to leave the flagstick in, leave it alone. Apparently, the Rules writers are trying to allow a caddie to stand near a flagstick and hole when the player could not see the surface and hence the hole (because downhill from that part of the green too far). In this case, the caddie who will leave the stick in can lift it high enough so the player can locate the hole, or stand beside the hole. If the decision is to take the flagstick out, the caddie or person attending the flag need not center the flagstick but can position it above or “beside” the hole. All of this is stupid and simply ADDS unnecessary technicality. The simple rule should be to allow lifting the stick directly above the hole in either case and nothing else.

Another wrinkle is that if the decision is to leave the flagstick in, the caddie may remove it until the stroke is played and then replace it before the ball arrives. Ok ...

R13.2 The Flagstick

This Rule applies to a ball played from anywhere on the course, whether on or off the putting green.

a. Leaving Flagstick in Hole

(1) Player May Leave Flagstick in Hole. The player may make a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole, so that it is possible for the ball in motion to hit the flagstick. Purpose: This Rule covers the player’s choices for dealing with the flagstick. The player may leave the flagstick in the hole or have it removed (which includes having someone attend the flagstick and remove it after the ball is played), but must decide

before making a stroke. There is normally no penalty if a ball in motion hits the flagstick.

The player must decide this before making the stroke, by either:

- Leaving the flagstick where it is in the hole or moving it so that it is centred in the hole and leaving it there, or
- Having a removed flagstick put back in the hole.

In either case:

- The player must not try to gain an advantage by deliberately moving the flagstick to a position other than centred in the hole.
- If the player does so and the ball in motion then hits the flagstick, he or she gets the general penalty.

(2) No Penalty If Ball Hits Flagstick Left in Hole. If the player makes a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole and the ball in motion then hits the flagstick:

- There is no penalty (except as provided in (1)), and
- The ball must be played as it lies.

(3) Limitation on Player Moving or Removing Flagstick in Hole While Ball Is in Motion. After making a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole:

- The player and his or her caddie must not deliberately move or remove the flagstick to affect where the player's ball in motion might come to rest (such as to avoid having the ball hit the flagstick). If this is done, the player gets the general penalty.
- But there is no penalty if the player has the flagstick in the hole moved or removed for any other reason, such as when he or she reasonably believes that the ball in motion will not hit the flagstick before coming to rest.

(4) Limitation on Other Players Moving or Removing Flagstick When Player Has Decided to Leave It in Hole. When the player has left the flagstick in the hole and has not authorized anyone to attend the flagstick (see Rule 13.2b(1)), another player must not deliberately move or remove the flagstick to affect where the player's ball in motion might come to rest.

- If another player or his or her caddie does so before or during the stroke and the player makes the stroke without being aware of this, or does so while the player's ball is in motion after the stroke, that other player gets the general penalty.

- But there is no penalty if the other player or his or her caddie moves or removes the flagstick for any other reason, such as when he or she:

Reasonably believes that the player's ball in motion will not hit the flagstick before coming to rest, or

Is not aware that the player is about to play or that the player's ball is in motion.

See Rules 22.2 (in Foursomes, either partner may act for the side and action by the partner is treated as action of the player); 23.5 (in Four-Ball, either partner may act for the side and action by the partner concerning the player's ball or equipment is treated as action of the player).

b. Removing Flagstick from Hole

(1) Player May Have Flagstick Removed from Hole. The player may make a stroke with the flagstick removed from the hole, so that his or her ball in motion will not hit the flagstick in the hole.

The player must decide this before making the stroke, by either:

- Having the flagstick removed from the hole before playing the ball, or
- Authorizing someone to attend the flagstick, which means to remove it by:

First holding the flagstick in, above or next to the hole before and during the stroke to show the player where the hole is, and

making a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole:

Then removing the flagstick after the stroke is made.

The player is treated as having authorized the flagstick to be attended if:

- The player's caddie is holding the flagstick in, above or next to the hole or is standing right next to the hole when the stroke is made, even if the player is not aware the caddie is doing so,
- The player asks any other person to attend the flagstick and that person does so, or
- The player sees any other person holding the flagstick in, above or next to the hole or standing right next to the hole, and the player makes the stroke without asking that person to move away or to leave the flagstick in the hole.

(2) What to Do If Ball Hits Flagstick or Person Attending Flagstick. If the player's ball in motion hits a flagstick that the player had decided to have removed under (1), or

hits the person who is attending the flagstick (or anything the person is holding), what happens depends on whether this was accidental or deliberate:

- **Ball Accidentally Hits Flagstick or Person Who Removed or Is Attending It.** If the player's ball in motion accidentally hits the flagstick or the person who removed or is attending it (or anything the person is holding), there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies.
- **Ball Deliberately Deflected or Stopped by Person Attending Flagstick.** If the person who is attending the flagstick deliberately deflects or stops the player's ball in motion, Rule 11.2c applies:

Where Ball Is Played from. The player must not play the ball as it lies and instead must take relief under Rule 11.2c.

When Penalty Applies. If the person who deliberately deflected or stopped the ball was a player or his or her caddie, that player gets the general penalty for a breach of Rule 11.2.

For purposes of this Rule, "deliberately deflected or stopped" means the same thing as in Rule 11.2a, and includes when the player's ball in motion hits:

- A removed flagstick that was deliberately positioned or left in a particular place on the ground so that it might deflect or stop the ball,
- An attended flagstick that the person deliberately failed to remove from the hole or to move out of the way of the ball, or
- The person who attended or removed the flagstick (or anything the person was holding), when he or she deliberately failed to move out of the way of the ball.

Exception – Restrictions on Deliberately Moving Flagstick to Affect a Ball in Motion (see Rule 11.3).

See Rules 22.2 (in Foursomes, either partner may act for the side and action by the partner is treated as action of the player); 23.5 (in Four-Ball, either partner may act for the side and action by the partner concerning the player's ball or equipment is treated as action of the player).

c. Ball Resting against Flagstick in Hole

treated as holed even if the entire ball is not below the surface.

- If no part of the ball is in the hole below the surface of the putting green:

The ball is not holed and must be played as it lies.

If the flagstick is removed and the ball moves (whether it falls into the hole or moves away from the hole), there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced on the lip of the hole (see Rule 14.2).

Penalty for Playing Incorrectly Substituted Ball or Playing Ball from a Wrong Place in Breach of Rule 13.2c: General Penalty under Rule 6.3b or 14.7a.

If multiple Rule breaches result from a single act or related acts, see Rule 1.3c(4).

In stroke play, the player is disqualified if he or she fails to hole out as required under Rule 3.3c.

1. Ball moves

This Rule covers balls 1) that move due to natural forces (replace if movement is after marking; play from new location if movement is before marking); 2) that move accidentally by the player or another (replace without penalty); and 3) that move by intentional action of the player or other (replace with penalty). A new standard means that movement is presumed caused by natural forces (and replaced or not depending on whether movement is before or after marking) UNLESS it is “virtually certain” the player or other accidentally or intentionally caused the movement.

That’s a mouthful that should simply say replace the ball without penalty whenever it moves after marking unless the movement was intentionally caused, and then replace with penalty. If the ball moves before marking either by natural forces, play from the new location. If before marking, the player accidentally caused the ball to move and this is “virtually certain”, replace the ball without penalty.

It’s still illegal to start a stroke and then the ball starts moving and completing the stroke while the ball is in a different position and also in motion at impact.

Ball moved

Player accidentally moves his or her ball or ball-marker on the putting green

New rule: No penalty.

Current rule: 1-stroke penalty (with exceptions).

2019 Rule: Under Rule 13.1d, there will no longer be a penalty if a player (or opponent) accidentally causes the player's ball to move on the putting green.

The substance of this Rule change has already been implemented as of 1 January 2017 by authorizing Committees to adopt a Local Rule that eliminates the penalty for accidentally moving a ball on the putting green.

Reasons for Change:

The shape, slope and condition of many putting greens today increase the chances that a ball at rest on the putting green might move, and it can be difficult to determine whether a player caused the ball to move or whether the ball was moved by wind or other natural causes.

When a ball moves while the player is doing nothing more than taking normal actions to prepare for a stroke, it can seem unfair for the player to be penalized.

Most "ball moved" situations occur on the putting green, involve minimal movement of the ball, frequently occur when the player is taking reasonable actions to prepare for a stroke and the ball can be easily replaced.

These considerations are not the same when the ball lies off the putting green, and so the penalty will continue to apply (with exceptions, such as accidentally moving a ball during search) to a player or opponent in those circumstances to reinforce the principle that the ball should be played as it lies and that players should continue to exercise care when near to a ball in play.

2019 Rule: Rule 13.1d, will revise the procedure for when a ball on the putting green is moved by wind, water or other natural forces, so that it must sometimes be replaced and sometimes be played from its new spot:

- If the ball had been lifted and replaced on its original spot before it moved, the ball must always be replaced on its original spot, regardless of what caused it to move.
- The ball must be played from its new spot only if the ball had not been lifted and replaced before it moved.

Reasons for Change:

When a ball at rest is moved by natural forces such as the wind, it is normally played as it lies because its movement is considered a continuation of the previous stroke, as no person or object has affected where the ball lies.

But when the moved ball had already been lifted and replaced, the connection to the previous stroke is no longer obvious.

This is especially true on the putting green, where a player is allowed to mark, lift and replace a ball for any reason and many players do so as a matter of course.

When a ball on the green moves after having come to rest:

- It can result in outcomes that seem unfair, such as when the ball rolls off the green (sometimes ending up in a bunker or in water) or rolls close to or into the hole.
- Requiring the ball to be replaced if it had already been lifted and replaced will eliminate such outcomes in those situations.

Areas of the course

Putting green

Replacing a ball on the putting green when it moves from its spot after it already had been lifted and replaced

New rule: The ball must always be replaced on its original spot, even if it was blown by the wind or moved for no clear reason.

Current rule: The ball is replaced only if a player or outside agency caused it to move; otherwise, the ball is played from its new location.

2019 Rule: Under Rule 9.2, the “known or virtually certain” standard (meaning at least 95% likely) will apply to all questions of fact about why a ball at rest moved:

- A player, opponent or outside influence will be found to have caused the ball to move if the player, opponent or outside influence was known or virtually certain to have caused it to move; otherwise it will be assumed that natural forces caused it to move.

Reasons for Change:

The weight of the evidence test is often difficult to apply in ball moved situations:

- Many competing factors need to be balanced, such as what the player did near the ball, the lapse of time before the ball moved, the lie of the ball, the slope and other course conditions near the ball and the presence of wind or weather conditions, and
- There is no prescribed way of prioritizing or balancing these factors.

The “known or virtually certain” standard will be simpler to apply because it will eliminate most “close calls” where it is hard to know for sure why the ball moved. This Rule change also means that only the single standard of “known or virtually certain” will be used for all ball moved questions, rather than the situation under the current Rules where different standards apply in deciding whether an outside influence moved a ball or whether the player or opponent did so.

1. Ball deflected

Golf's New Rules: Major Changes

2019 Rule: Under Rule 11.1, for all accidental deflections, including when the ball hits the player or opponent or their equipment or caddies:

- There will be no penalty and the ball will be played as it lies (with limited exceptions).
- To address any concern that a player might deliberately position equipment to act as a backstop and potentially deflect his or her ball, there will be a penalty if the ball hits equipment that was positioned for that purpose (Rule 11.2a).

Reasons for Change:

Many objects, persons and animals are present on a golf course during play; it is inevitable that a ball in motion will sometimes hit them before coming to rest, and a player is generally required to accept the outcome (whether good or bad).

Just as there is no penalty in stroke play if one player (or his or her equipment or caddie) accidentally deflects another player's ball, there is no need for a penalty when a player (or the player's equipment or caddie) accidentally deflects his or her own ball.

- The outcome in such cases is random and unpredictable, and it results in a disadvantage for the player at least as often as it results in an advantage.

Ball in motion

Accidental deflection

Player's ball in motion accidentally hits the player, his or her caddie, the person attending the flagstick or the attended or removed flagstick

New rule: No penalty.

Current rule: 1-stroke penalty (except it is a 2-stroke penalty when the accidental deflection relates to the flagstick or the attendant).

Player turn R5.6

When to play during a round

1. Pace of play

Recommendations on how to play promptly

New rule: Recommends that players make each stroke in no more than 40 seconds, and usually in less time.

Current rule: No recommendations are given.

When to play during a round (continued)

Pace of play

Playing out of turn in stroke play

New rule: No penalty (as today), and "ready golf" is encouraged when it can be done in a safe and responsible way.

Current rule: No penalty, but the current Rule is written in a way that may imply that playing out of turn is wrong or is not allowed.

Pace of play

Other changes to help pace of play

Other new rules: Reduced time for search, allowing more areas to be marked as penalty areas, expanded use of red penalty areas, the simplified dropping procedure and allowing a player to putt with the flagstick in the hole.

2019 Rule: Rule 5.6 will encourage prompt pace of play by recommending that:

- Players should recognize that their pace of play affects others and they should play promptly throughout the round (such as by preparing in advance for each stroke and moving promptly between strokes and in going to the next tee),
- A player should make a stroke in no more than 40 seconds (and usually in less time) after the player is able to play without interference or distraction, and
- Committees should adopt a Pace of Play Policy (rather than only say they may do so).

In addition, new Rule 6.4 will expressly allow playing out of turn in match play by agreement, and for stroke play, will affirmatively allow and encourage players to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way to save time or for convenience (also known as “ready golf”).

Reasons for Change:

By giving players affirmative guidance, support and encouragement on prompt play, these proposed Rule changes will help in:

- Setting expectations for both beginners and experienced players on what types of behavior are considered prompt play, including the maximum amount of time it should normally take to make a stroke, and
- Encouraging players to play faster by confirming that it is proper to play out of turn in stroke play when it is safe and responsible to do so (that is, to play “ready golf”).

Enforcing pace of play will continue to be primarily up to each Committee, as there are limits to what the Rules themselves can do to insist that players play promptly. These changes will enable Committees to point to specific expectations set by the Rules when using their authority to enforce prompt play, and encourage every

Committee to adopt a pace of play policy so that all players on the course, whatever the type or level of play, will know what is expected of them.

(2) Playing Out of Turn in a Safe and Responsible Way (“Ready Golf”). Players are both allowed and encouraged to play out of turn in a safe and responsible way, such as when:

- Two or more players agree to do so for convenience or to save time,
- A player’s ball comes to rest a very short distance from the hole and the player wishes to hole out, or
- An individual player is ready and able to play before another player whose turn it is to play under the normal order of play in (1), so long as in playing out of turn the player does not endanger, distract or interfere with any other player.

But if the player whose turn it is to play under (1) is ready and able to play and indicates that he or she wants to play first, other players should generally wait until that player has played.

A player should not play out of turn to gain an advantage over other players.

1. Damaged clubs

Equipment

Damaged clubs

Use of clubs damaged during round

New rule: A player may keep using any damaged club, no matter the nature or cause of the damage, even if the player damaged it in anger.

Current rule: A player may use the damaged club only if it was damaged in the “normal course of play.”

Damaged clubs

Adding clubs to replace a club damaged during round

New rule: A player may not replace a damaged club, unless the player was not responsible for the damage.

Current rule: A player may replace a damaged club if it is “unfit for play” and was damaged in the “normal course of play.”

1. Caddie alignment

Playing a ball

Advice and help

Caddie standing behind a player to help with that player's alignment

New rule: A caddie is not allowed to deliberately stand on or close to the extended line of play behind a player while the player is taking his or her stance until the stroke is made.

Current rule: A caddie is allowed to stand on a line behind a player while the player is taking a stance and preparing to play, but must not stand there while the player makes the stroke.

1. Missed opportunities — anchoring and caddie books

On the absence of any changes to the anchoring ban: "They had a chance to make that clear and they didn't. Could have just said it can't be over a certain length and can't touch any part of your body."

R10.1

b. Anchoring the Club

Purpose: Rule 10 covers how to prepare for and make a stroke, including advice and other help the player may get from others (including caddies). The underlying principle is that golf is a game of skill and personal challenge.

Purpose: Rule 10.1 covers how to make a stroke and several acts that are prohibited in doing so. A stroke is made by fairly striking at a ball with the head of a club. The fundamental challenge is to direct and control the movement of the entire club by freely swinging the club without anchoring it.

In making a stroke, the player must not anchor the club, either:

- Directly, by holding the club or a gripping hand against any part of the body (except that the player may hold the club or a gripping hand against a hand or forearm), or

- Indirectly, through use of an “anchor point,” by holding a forearm against any part of the body to use a gripping hand as a stable point around which the other hand may swing the club.

If the player’s club, gripping hand or forearm merely touches his or her body or clothing during the stroke, without being held against the body, there is no breach of this Rule.

For the purposes of this Rule, “forearm” means the part of the arm below the elbow joint and includes the wrist.

Banning caddie books with surface slope and fall line for assistance in reading and playing break.

The “yardage book” was first used illegally by pros in the 1960s and the pros refused to stop when told to do so by the USGA and the R&A. The embarrassing impasse was “resolved” by the USGA and R&A creating a new rule that banned “artificial devices” UNLESS ruled as “traditionally accepted” by golfers. In other words, any illegal “horse that is out of the barn” for a while becomes “legal”, despite the new practice undermining SKILL.

Hence, “yardage books” were deemed “traditionally accepted” but still could contain only distance numbers, and could not include surface elevations or other conditions of the course. Then caddies and golfers started compiling hole-by-hole maps with all sorts of “conditions” included, with practice-round notes about how to play different shots. No one said anything, even though the caddie book is arguably an illegal artificial device used to help play with information about conditions not obtained by the golfer’s skill. Then some specific pro caddies started producing and selling books for different courses in professional play, including books for the US Open and other national and international competitions. These commercial productions were generated using very expensive and time-consuming laser mapping of the course for perimeters, shape, contour, slope, fall lines, and elevation information. No one said anything.

Then “distance measuring devices” (laser range finders) appeared, and the more expensive courses even incorporated video course maps on the golf carts giving

lasered distance measurements. Then these DMDs began offering computed “plays as” calculations for how elevation changes added or subtracts yardage to shots. The USGA and R&A “officially” banned all DMDs but allowed local committees to allow them, but only so long as the “plays as” function is not allowed. Then the USGA and R&A switched to allow DMDs unless local committees said otherwise, and in any event DMDs that offer “plays as” or “slope” functions are always illegal.

May a player use a DMD? Yes. Distance-measuring devices are allowed unless the The [local] Committee prohibits them. However, you must not use a slope or wind function on your DMD (see Rule 4.3a(1)).

The old Rule 14-3 provided disqualification for use of an “artificial device” not previously ruled “traditionally accepted.”

The only two exceptions allowing artificial devices as “traditionally accepted” are “yardage (only) books” and the unusual use of the putter in “plumb bobbing”. Both would otherwise be illegal and result in immediate disqualification.

The “traditionally accepted” rule was watered down to eliminate a prior official decision of the USGA or R&A about a specific practice.

Then the USGA authorized the equipment czar to pre-approved submitted “devices” that might be deemed artificial devices resulting in disqualification. This czar, Dick Rugge, apparently went a bit overboard (“nuts”) approving devices that helped bad golfers like the game a bit more — I.e., he had a rather limited respect for skill and a high anxiety for the growing parade of golfers annually leaving the game.

Then this Rule was watered down so that disqualification was not the first penalty and not automatic.

Then the concept of “artificial device” was eliminated and “equipment” was redefined to include anything carried on the course by player or caddie. Under this rule, only using the equipment other than a club or ball to gain an artificial advantage is penalized.

Rule 4.3 applies to all types of equipment that you might use during your round. This Rule only concerns how you use equipment. It does not limit the equipment that you may have with you during a round.

a. Allowed and Prohibited Uses of Equipment

You may use equipment to help your play during a round, except that you must not create a potential advantage by:

- Using equipment (other than a club or a ball) that artificially eliminates or reduces the need for a skill or judgment that is essential to the challenge of the game, or
- Using equipment (including a club or a ball) in an abnormal way in making your stroke. “Abnormal way” means a way that is fundamentally different than its intended use and is not normally recognized as part of playing the game.

For common examples of uses of equipment that are allowed and not allowed during your round, such as the use of equipment to measure distance or wind conditions, the use of a device to provide club recommendations or the use of a training aid.

Penalty for Breach of Rule 4.3:

- Penalty for first breach: General Penalty.
- Penalty for second breach: Disqualification. There are limited situations where a second breach is considered a related act to the first breach and therefore only the general penalty applies.

In all of this, the issue of using smart phones during play became a problem, with players checking how holes in front of them had been played by other competitors, watching training videos, and accessing commercial information about the course conditions including green contours and slopes and wind direction and speed. The USGA and R&A have bungled these issues atrociously by failing to insist on golf as a game of SKILL with rules protecting skillful golfers from CHEATING by unskilled golfers using help to play the game.

In all of this, the USGA and R&A have failed to deal directly with commercially-prepared caddie books with green maps of slope percent and fall lines and equal-

elevation contour lines and even smart-phone apps and other booklets giving “reads” for break over slope given a specific green speed.

Hopefully, the new formula banning use of anything other than the club and ball “that artificially eliminates or reduces the need for a skill or judgment that is essential to the challenge of the game” will be read expansively to ban such “cheating”. Golf is a game of skill, especially when competition is involved. No one requires anyone to accept the challenge, and actually no one requires players to follow the rules — unless the competition requires it or the establishment of a handicap requires it. In that case however — “No cheating.” Simple.

Cheers!

Geoff Mangum

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