



January 8, 2008

To all Members of the Roseville Golf Club:

On January 1, 2008 the Bi-annual Rules revisions adopted by USGA and The R & A became effective.

These changes fall into two broad categories: (1) those that improve the clarity of the Rules and (2) those that reduce the penalties in certain circumstances to ensure that they are proportionate. While you may never be affected by most of these changes, there are three that are significant and affect situations that occur often during our play of the game.

FIRST:

The term “*reasonable evidence*” has been replaced by “**known or virtually certain**” when determining whether a ball that has not been found may be treated as moved by an outside agency (Rule 18-1) or lost in an obstruction (Rule 24-3), an abnormal ground condition (Rule 25-1c), or a water hazard (26-1). The new term indicates the level of confidence that is required for a player to proceed under the rules of relief from the condition.

All available evidence must be taken into account in determining whether certainty exists, such as witness and the conditions in the area. A player may not assume that his ball is in the condition simply because there is a possibility that it may be. The operative question is, ‘Could the ball be anywhere else?’. There must be almost no doubt.

For example, striking a ball towards a water hazard or observing a ball splash in a water hazard would not necessarily provide knowledge or virtual certainty as to the location of the ball as sometimes such a ball may skip out of a hazard.

Additionally, if deep rough surrounds a water hazard or there are leaves or debris under which the ball may be hiding you must not assume that it is in the hazard.

Under these circumstances, if the ball is not found, it must be considered lost under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 27-1).

This same strict principle would apply for a ball that may have been moved by an outside agency or a ball that has not been found and may be in an obstruction or an abnormal ground condition.

SECOND:

The penalty for the accidental deflection of a ball by a player, his partner or either of their caddies or equipment (Rule 19-2) has been reduced to one penalty stroke in both match play and stroke play. (Prior to January 1, 2008, the penalty was loss of hole in match play and two strokes in stroke play.)

For example, a player leaves his bag and a beverage on the edge of the fairway and proceeds to his ball for his next stroke. An errant shot slices right and knocks over his beverage. While the beverage is still lost, the penalty is now only one stroke instead of two.

THIRD:

A player will now be allowed to lift a ball for identification in a bunker or water hazard.

However, there will now be a two-stroke penalty for playing a wrong ball from a hazard. In match play, the penalty will be loss of hole.

As there are already several Rules, such as Rules 5-3 (Ball Unfit for Play) and 22-2 (Ball Interfering with Play) that allow or require a player to lift his ball from a hazard, this change will lead to a more consistent and understandable code. Additionally, this change will eliminate some difficult and unfortunate situations that can occur under the old rule.

For example, a player finds a ball in a hazard that may be his, and he then hits it out of bounds, without ever really knowing whether it was his ball. That would be a stroke and distance penalty that the player may not have deserved.

Before lifting the ball, the player must announce the intention and mark the position of the ball. He must give his opponent or fellow-competitor the opportunity to observe the lifting and replacement. The ball must not be cleaned beyond what is necessary to identify the ball. (Rule 12-2) If the ball is the player's ball, and he fails to comply with all or any part of this procedure, or he lifts his ball in order to identify it when not necessary to do so, he incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or one stroke in stroke play. The ball must then be replaced. If the lie of the ball is altered, the original lie must be recreated as nearly as possible. (Rule 20-3b) Penalty for breach is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play.

While this change will bring consistency, it also comes with a responsibility not to abuse it. Your fellow competitors will want to be certain that your desire to lift is not based on a desire to attempt to improve your lie or disturb loose impediments. Don't invite suspicion.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 916-791-2457 or e-mail me at freidaa@aol.com.

Par The Course,

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RGC Rules Chairman