

R&A



A Modification of the Rules of Golf for Golfers with Disabilities

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ROLEX



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A Modification of the Rules of Golf for Golfers with Disabilities

as approved by
R&A Rules Limited and
the United States Golf Association

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Preface

This publication contains permissible modifications to the Rules of Golf for use by disabled golfers. This is not intended to be a revision of the Rules of Golf as they apply to able-bodied players. As is the case for the Rules of Golf themselves, these modifications, along with the philosophy expressed herein, have been agreed upon by R&A Rules Limited and the United States Golf Association.

It is important to stress that these Rules modifications only apply if they have been introduced by the *Committee* in charge of a competition. These modifications do not apply automatically to a competition involving disabled golfers.

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Introduction

In modifying the Rules of Golf for golfers with disabilities, the desired result should allow the disabled golfer to play equitably with an able-bodied individual or a golfer with another type of disability. It is important to understand that this critical objective will occasionally result in a modification to a Rule that may seem unfair at first glance because a more simplified answer may appear to exist when two golfers with the same disability are playing against one another.

From a practical standpoint, it is useful to subdivide disabled golfers into groups, each one of which has a need for somewhat different Rules modifications. Five such groups are easily identified. They are blind golfers, amputee golfers, golfers requiring canes or crutches, golfers requiring wheelchairs and golfers with intellectual disabilities.

What follows is an attempt to adapt the Rules of Golf to these groups of disabled golfers, using the objective above as the ultimate goal.

All terms in *italics* are terms defined in the Rules of Golf. Please consult the Rules of Golf for the text of the defined terms.

Blind Golfers

Definition of “Coach”

The status of the coach and the duties that he may perform should be defined clearly. Without this clarification, it would be difficult, for example, to determine how a blind golfer must proceed if his ball were to strike his or another player’s coach after a *stroke*. Therefore, the following Definition is suggested:

Coach

A “coach” is one who assists a blind golfer in *addressing the ball* and with alignment prior to the *stroke*. A coach has the same status under the *Rules* as a *caddie*.

Note 1: A player may ask for and receive *advice* from his coach.

Note 2: A player may have only one coach at any one time.

Note 3: A coach may also be referred to as a “guide”. For the purpose of applying these modifications, a guide has the same status under the *Rules* as a coach.

Rule 6-4 (Caddie)

There is nothing in the *Rules* that would prohibit the coach of a blind golfer from functioning as his *caddie*. For a variety of reasons, however, a coach may not be able to perform the duties of a *caddie*. Therefore, it is permissible for a blind golfer to have both a coach and a *caddie*. In these circumstances, however, the coach must not carry or handle the player’s clubs except in helping the player take his *stance* or align himself prior to making the *stroke*, or in assisting him as permitted by analogy to Decision 6-4/4.5. Otherwise, the player would be subject to penalty under Rule 6-4 for having more than one *caddie*. Likewise, if a player has more than one coach at a given time, he is subject to penalty under Rule 6-4.

Rule 8-1 (Advice)

In view of the Definition of "Coach", it is suggested that Rule 8-1 be modified as follows:

8-1. Advice

During a *stipulated round*, a player must not:

- a. give *advice* to anyone in the competition playing on the *course* other than his *partner*, or
- b. ask for *advice* from anyone other than his *partner*, either of their *caddies* or, if applicable, their coaches.

Rule 13-4b (Grounding Club in Hazard)

The following additional Exception under Rule 13-4 is permissible:

Exceptions:

4. Provided nothing is done that constitutes testing the condition of the *hazard* or improves the lie of the ball, there is no penalty if a blind golfer grounds his club in a *hazard* preparatory to making a *stroke*. However, the player is deemed to have *addressed the ball* when he has taken his *stance*.

Rule 14-2b (Position of Caddie or Partner)

Due to the complexities involved in aligning a blind golfer, it may be difficult or unreasonable to expect the blind golfer and his coach to comply with Rule 14-2b. Therefore, there is no penalty if a player's coach positions himself on or close to an extension of the *line of play* or the *line of putt* behind the ball during a *stroke*, provided the coach does not assist the player in any other manner during the *stroke*.

However, given the intent of Rule 14-2b, it may be appropriate to prohibit a coach from remaining in a position that contravenes this Rule if he is performing the duties of a coach or a *caddie* for two different players simultaneously.

Amputee Golfers

At present, the only significant issue with respect to amputee golfers is the status of prosthetic devices. Decision 14-3/15 clarifies the R&A's position on such devices and is included here for reference.

14-3/15 Artificial Limbs

An artificial leg or arm is an artificial device within the meaning of the term in Rule 14-3. However, as such a device is used to alleviate a medical condition and the player has a legitimate medical reason to use the device, Exception 1 to Rule 14-3 applies, even if an artificial leg has been modified to aid a player in playing the game or an artificial arm has a fitting specially designed for gripping a golf club. However, the Committee must be satisfied that an artificial limb so modified does not give the player any undue advantage over other players. If the Committee is not satisfied of this, Exception 1 to Rule 14-3 does not apply and use of the device would constitute a breach of Rule 14-3.

Clubs used by a player with an artificial arm must conform with Rule 4-1 except that an attachment may be fitted to the grip or shaft to assist the player to hold the club. However, if the Committee believes that the use of a club modified in this way would give the player an undue advantage over other players, it should deem the attachment an artificial device contrary to Rule 14-3.

Players in doubt about the use of a device should raise the matter as soon as possible with the Committee.

A potential issue for some lower extremity amputee golfers who wear a prosthesis is their inability to climb into or out of bunkers, a situation that probably occurs rather infrequently. On that basis Rule 28 (Unplayable Ball) should apply without further modification.

Golfers Requiring Canes or Crutches

Definition of “Stance”

The use of assistive devices raises the question of what constitutes taking the *stance*. This is a critical element in determining relief from an immovable *obstruction* (Rule 24-2) and *abnormal ground conditions* (Rule 25-1) and whether or not a player is subject to penalty if his ball *moves* prior to his making a *stroke*. The following Definition is suggested:

Stance

Taking the “*stance*” consists in a player who is using an assistive device placing the device and, if applicable, his feet in position for and preparatory to making a *stroke*. The assistive device is deemed to be part of the player’s *stance*.

Rule 6-4 (Caddie)

By analogy to Decision 6-4/4.5, someone, including another *caddie* or player, who assists a player with the retrieval of his ball is not acting as the player’s *caddie*. Such an act does not constitute a breach of Rule 6-4, which prohibits a player from having more than one *caddie* at any one time.

Rule 13-2 (Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play)

The interpretation of what constitutes a player “fairly taking his *stance*” is one of the most difficult judgement calls in golf. Whereas most of the Rules of Golf are objective, this Rule is highly subjective. Decision 13-2/1 (Explanation of “Fairly Taking His Stance”) lends some clarification to this phrase, but significant grey areas remain.

The disabled golfer who is using an assistive device is entitled to bend or even break the branches of a tree or bush in order to fairly take his *stance*. However, he may not use the device to deliberately hold back branches that would otherwise interfere with the area of his intended

stance or swing, or *line of play*. There is not, nor will there probably ever be, a substitute for the judgement required to interpret this Rule.

Rule 13-3 (Building Stance)

The use of assistive devices by disabled golfers does not constitute building a *stance* within the meaning of the term in Rule 13-3.

Another issue relating to this Rule concerns the following query:

If a player builds a *stance* so that his supporting crutch does not slip during the swing, is he in breach of this Rule?

This is an interesting question, because the answer is also dependent on the concept of “fairly taking his *stance*” (Rule 13-2).

A player who “builds a *stance*” by creating a raised mound of soil against which he braces his crutch would be in breach of Rule 13-3 for building a *stance*. However, a certain amount of “digging in” with the feet is permitted. By analogy, this would allow for some “digging in” with an assistive device in an effort to prevent slipping, but there is a point beyond which the player would be in breach of “fairly taking his *stance*”. As noted in the discussion of Rule 13-2 above, this is a very subjective determination that the *Committee* must make after considering all of the circumstances.

Rule 13-4a (Testing the Condition of the Hazard) and Rule 13-4b (Touching the Ground in the Hazard)

Decision 13-4/0.5 clarifies that a player may not gain additional information about the condition of a *hazard* through actions other than those that are necessary to allow him to reach his ball and take his *stance*. Therefore, a player who enters a *hazard* with canes or crutches would not be in breach of Rules 13-4a or 13-4b, provided that his actions are not intended to test the condition of the *hazard*.

Rule 14-2 (Assistance)

Prior to the *stroke*, it is permissible for a disabled golfer to accept physical assistance from anyone for the purpose of positioning himself or any assistive device that he is using. The provisions of this Rule apply only while the player is making a *stroke*.

Rule 14-3 (Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment)

Assistive devices are considered artificial devices or unusual equipment under Rule 14-3. However, a player is not in breach of Rule 14-3 if (a) the device is designed for or has the effect of alleviating a medical condition, (b) the player has a legitimate medical reason to use the device, and (c) the *Committee* is satisfied that its use does not give the player any undue advantage over other players.

Rule 16-1e (Standing Astride or on Line of Putt)

In view of the proposed Definition of “*Stance*”, it is suggested that Rule 16-1e be modified to read:

e. Standing Astride or on Line of Putt

The player must not make a *stroke* on the *putting green* from a *stance* astride, or with either foot or any assistive device touching, the *line of putt* or an extension of that line behind the ball.

Exception: There is no penalty if the *stance* is inadvertently taken on or astride the *line of putt* (or an extension of that line behind the ball) or is taken to avoid standing on another player’s *line of putt* or prospective *line of putt*.

Rule 20-1 (Lifting and Marking)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Wheelchairs.

Rule 22 (Ball Assisting or Interfering with Play)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Wheelchairs.

Rule 24-2 (Immovable Obstruction) and Rule 25-1 (Abnormal Ground Conditions)

The amended Definition of “*Stance*” would entitle a player to relief from an immovable *obstruction* or an *abnormal ground condition* if, in fairly taking his *stance*, the *obstruction* or the *abnormal ground condition* interfered with the positioning of his assistive device. However, the Exceptions under Rules 24 and 25 would preclude relief for a player who has interference from these conditions as a result of placing his assistive device in an unnecessarily abnormal position for the required shot or using an unnecessarily abnormal direction of play.

Rule 28 (Ball Unplayable)

It is a fact that one able-bodied golfer may attempt and successfully execute a *stroke* with a ball that another able-bodied golfer may have deemed unplayable. It is also a fact that the disabled golfer who requires the use of canes, crutches or any other type of assistive device may occasionally be unable to make a *stroke* at a ball that the able-bodied golfer could play. For example, a player using crutches may need to deem a ball that lies on a steep slope of wet grass unplayable in an effort to eliminate the possibility of injury from a fall. However, this situation is not any different than a case where the balls of two able-bodied golfers lie on a gravel cart path, and one player makes the *stroke* and the other player deems his ball unplayable, thus obviating any chance of an injury from flying gravel.

One might argue that because the situations noted above are potentially dangerous, Decision I-4/10 (Dangerous Situation; Rattlesnake or Bees Interfere with Play) should apply, and the player should be entitled to free relief as prescribed by that Decision. While the situations described in the preceding paragraph are potentially dangerous they are not analogous to the circumstances contemplated or the answer offered in Decision I-4/10. That Decision concerns the player who encounters a dangerous situation that is both totally out of his control and unrelated to the normal playing of the game (see Decision I-4/11). Additionally, it presupposes that the player's ball is in a playable position. If this were not the case, the player would have to proceed under the unplayable ball Rule incurring a penalty of one stroke, rather than obtaining free relief as prescribed by the Decision.

Ultimately, all players must exercise their best judgement in determining whether they are placing themselves at risk by making a particular *stroke*. If they are, then their best option may be to deem the ball unplayable. Rule 28 must govern in these situations. Providing relief without penalty in any instance in which there may be a potential for injury will create an unmanageable situation ripe with the potential for abuse.

Golfers Requiring Wheelchairs

Definition of “Stance”

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on the Ball), Rule 13-1 (Ball Played as It Lies) and Rule 18-2a (Ball at Rest Moved by Player)

Prior to making a *stroke*, golfers who play from a wheelchair have traditionally moved the ball a short distance to facilitate positioning it in their *stance* before *address*, a manoeuvre often referred to as “bumping” the ball. This practice is no longer considered necessary and is not an acceptable modification of the Rules of Golf.

Rule 6-4 (Caddie)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches for considerations regarding this Rule. In addition, it would be permissible for a wheelchair golfer to employ both a *caddie* and an aide to assist him, provided that the aide does not carry or handle the player's clubs (see Rule 8-1 below). Depending on his responsibilities, the status of the aide would need to be clarified (see discussion of “Coach” under Blind Golfers; see also discussion of “Supervisor” under Golfers with Intellectual Disabilities).

Rule 8-1 (Advice)

If a wheelchair golfer employs both a *caddie* and an aide (see Rule 6-4 above), the aide would be prohibited from giving *advice* to the player.

Rule 13-2 (Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 13-3 (Building Stance)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 14-2 (Physical Assistance)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 14-3 (Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 16-1e (Standing Astride or on Line of Putt)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 20-1 (Lifting and Marking)

Rule 20-1 states in part:

If a ball or ball-marker is accidentally *moved* in the process of lifting the ball under a *Rule* or marking its position, the ball or the ball-marker must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is “directly attributable” to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball. Otherwise, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under this Rule or Rule 18-2a.

This Rule requires no modification for use by disabled golfers. However, because physical limitations and assistive devices, especially chairs, may restrict access to the ball, the Rule should be interpreted loosely enough to give the disabled golfer the benefit of the doubt in cases where directly attributable becomes an issue.

Rule 20-2a (Dropping and Re-Dropping; By Whom and How)

Rather than have a disabled golfer who uses a wheelchair hold the ball above his head and drop it or throw the ball upwards to what shoulder height would be if he were to stand erect, and in an effort to provide some uniformity, the following modification to Rule 20-2a is suggested:

20-2. Dropping and Re-Dropping

a. By Whom and How

A ball to be dropped under the *Rules* must be dropped by the player himself. He must either stand or sit erect, hold the ball at

shoulder height and arm's length and drop it. If a ball is dropped by any other person or in any other manner and the error is not corrected as provided in Rule 20-6, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke.

Rule 20-3 (Placing and Replacing)

While a player may give another person the authority to retrieve or lift his ball, only the player or his *partner* may place a ball under the *Rules*. Because of physical limitations, it may be difficult or impossible for the disabled golfer playing in a wheelchair to place a ball as provided in Rule 20-3a. The following modification to Rule 20-3a is suggested:

20-3 Placing and Replacing

a. By Whom and Where

A ball to be placed under the *Rules* must be placed by the player, his *partner* or another person authorised by the player.

Replacing the ball should rarely pose any difficulty, as Rule 20-3 allows for replacement not only by the player or his *partner* but also by the person who lifted it.

Rule 22 (Ball Assisting or Interfering with Play)

Disabled golfers using assistive devices may be inclined not to lift their balls on the *putting green* in an effort to reduce the potential for damage to the *putting green* surface. This is not the problem it may seem to be, as the player may authorise another person to lift and mark his ball.

Rule 24-2 (Immovable Obstruction) and Rule 25-1 (Abnormal Ground Conditions)

See same entry under Golfers Requiring Canes and Crutches.

Rule 26 Water Hazards (including Lateral Water Hazards)

Wheelchair golfers encounter problems in manoeuvring themselves into position to make a *stroke*. This problem is particularly acute in taking relief from a *lateral water hazard* under Rule 26-1c which entitles a player to drop within two club-lengths of and not nearer the *hole*

than the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the *water hazard*. After having dropped a ball, a wheelchair golfer may not be able to play it because the slope of the *water hazard* banking or the proximity of the *water hazard* itself makes it impossible to position his wheelchair in order to make a *stroke*. The following modification to the language of Rule 26-1c is recommended:

- c. As additional options available only if the ball last crossed the margin of a *lateral water hazard*, drop a ball outside the *water hazard* within four club-lengths of and not nearer the *hole* than (i) the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the *water hazard* or (ii) a point on the opposite margin of the *water hazard* equidistant from the *hole*.

Rule 28 (Ball Unplayable)

While it is accepted that one able-bodied golfer may attempt and successfully execute a *stroke* with a ball that another able-bodied golfer may have deemed unplayable, the problems faced by wheelchair golfers are much more marked. Wheelchair golfers encounter specific problems in playing golf and manoeuvring themselves into position to make a *stroke*, often down to the uneven terrain present on most golf courses.

For example, a ball just off the fairway in trees or a ball on a moderate slope may be unplayable due to the difficulty of getting there or the risk of the wheelchair toppling over. Moreover, a ball in a *bunker* may be difficult, if not impossible, to play due to the *bunker* design. For example, a steep face or edge may prevent a wheelchair golfer entering or exiting the *bunker*, and soft and deep sand may hinder movement such that the wheelchair golfer cannot get to his ball or adjust his position to comfortably take his *stance*.

Rule 28c allows a player to drop a ball within two club-lengths of the spot where the ball lay, but, for the reasons outlined above, such relief may not be sufficient. Furthermore, with regard to a ball in a *bunker*, although previously the modifications allowed a player to drop a ball outside the *bunker* under Rule 28 with an additional penalty of one stroke – making two penalty strokes in total – this option was viewed

as unduly harsh on the wheelchair golfer whose ball was in a very playable position, but he was prevented from getting to it because of the bunker's design.

Consequently, the following modification to the language of Rule 28 is recommended:

Rule 28. Ball Unplayable

If a disabled golfer deems his ball to be unplayable, he must under penalty of one stroke:

- a. Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was played (see Rule 20-5); or
- b. Drop a ball behind the point where the ball lay, keeping that point directly between the *hole* and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far behind that point the ball may be dropped. If the unplayable ball is in a *bunker*, a ball may be dropped outside the *bunker* when proceeding under this Clause; or
- c. Drop a ball within four club-lengths of the spot where the ball lay, but not nearer the *hole*. If the unplayable ball is in a *bunker*, a ball must be dropped in the *bunker* when proceeding under this Clause.

While the above language may provide the basis for handling the problem wheelchair golfers face in dealing with *bunkers*, it will raise some significant handicapping issues if it is ultimately adopted as the solution. The handicapping issues are addressed more specifically in a subsequent section of this publication.

Golfers With Intellectual Disabilities

The needs of the golfer with intellectual disabilities will be unique to that individual and dependent upon the severity of the disability. If it is elected to play by the *Rules*, this group of individuals should be able to do so, although some players may require on-course supervision to facilitate some or all aspects of play, including etiquette. In that regard, the on-course supervisor would, in some cases, be somewhat analogous to the coach used by a blind golfer. In other situations, where someone is present on an as needed basis this person would be classified as an “overseer”. An overseer’s function is more general in scope. An overseer is there to assist any player requiring assistance and is not specifically assigned to one player. The following definition is suggested:

Overseer

An “overseer” is one employed by the *Committee* and assists with the conduct of the competition. He is not assigned to a specific player nor is he part of a *side*. An “overseer” is an *outside agency*.

The status of the “supervisor” and the duties that he may perform should be defined clearly. Without this clarification it would be difficult for a golfer with intellectual disabilities to determine how he should proceed in a variety of *Rules* situations that may arise, e.g. seeking *advice*, or if his ball were to strike his or another player’s supervisor after a *stroke*. The following Definition is suggested:

Supervisor

A “supervisor” is one who assists a golfer with intellectual disabilities in his play, the application of the *Rules* and etiquette. A supervisor has the same status under the *Rules* as a *caddie*.

Note 1: A player may ask for and receive *advice* from his supervisor.

Note 2: A player may have only one supervisor at any one time.

Rule 6-4 (Caddie)

The supervisor of a golfer with intellectual disabilities would, in some ways, be analogous to the coach of a blind golfer and, as such, the role of the supervisor may conflict with Rule 6-4 (Caddie). Therefore, there should not be a prohibition against a golfer with intellectual disabilities, having both a supervisor and a *caddie*. In these circumstances however, the supervisor may not carry or handle the player's clubs, except in assisting him as permitted by analogy to Decision 6-4/4.5. Otherwise, the player would be subject to penalty under Rule 6-4 for having more than one *caddie*.

Rule 8-1 (Advice)

In view of the Definition of "supervisor", it is suggested that Rule 8-1 be modified as follows:

8-1. Advice

During a *stipulated round*, a player must not:

- a. give *advice* to anyone in the competition playing on the *course* other than his *partner*, or
- b. ask for *advice* from anyone other than his *partner*, either of their *caddies* or, if applicable, their supervisors.

While the above language may provide the basis for handling the difficulties that golfers with intellectual disabilities face in dealing with the *Rules* and etiquette, there may be additional problems if the golfer has both intellectual and physical disabilities. In this case it is suggested that a combination of the Modification of the Rules of Golf for both golfers with intellectual disabilities and golfers who are physically disabled, if applicable, should be applied.

Miscellaneous Issues

Golfers With Other Disabilities; List of Equipment Permitted Conditionally for Medical Reasons

There are many golfers who have physical limitations that may result in

some degree of disability and that may have a significant impact on their ability to play the game. Examples include partially sighted golfers and golfers who cannot grip a club because of severe arthritis or missing digits. The foregoing Rules modifications do not specifically apply to these individuals. However, in cases where an artificial device, such as a brace or a gripping aid, will allow an individual to play, the individual may approach the *Committee* in charge of the competition for permission to use the device under the Exception to Rule 14-3. Alternatively, the *R&A* will review and issue a preliminary decision, on a case-by-case basis, as to whether or not the use of such a device constitutes a breach of Rule 14-3 (Artificial Devices, Unusual Equipment and Unusual Use of Equipment). The *R&A* will then pass that preliminary decision to the *Committee* for it to decide whether the device gives the player any undue advantage over other players and therefore whether to permit it or not. Any player may request a ruling on an assistive device that they wish to use by submitting a written request to the *R&A*. See also the entry under List of Equipment Permitted Conditionally for Medical Reasons below.

List of Equipment Permitted Conditionally for Medical Reasons

In addition, the *R&A* publishes a List of Equipment Permitted Conditionally for Medical Reasons on its website, www.randa.org. This is a list of mass produced, commercial products targeted at specific conditions. A player is not considered to be in breach of the Rules for using a device on the List if:

- a. he establishes with the *Committee* in charge of the competition, that he currently has a medical condition identified with a particular device on the List, and
- b. the *Committee* determines that the player would not gain an undue advantage over other players in that competition by using the device.

Etiquette – Courtesy on the Course, Pace of Play

This section in “The Rules of Golf” states:

Players should play at a good pace. The *Committee* may establish pace of play guidelines that all players should follow.

It is a group's responsibility to keep up with the group in front. If it loses a clear hole and it is delaying the group behind, it should invite the group behind to play through, irrespective of the number of players in that group. Where a group has not lost a clear hole, but it is apparent that the group behind can play faster, it should invite the faster moving group to play through.

Both able-bodied and disabled golfers should make their best effort to maintain their pace of play and their position on the *course*. No one deserves special consideration with regard to this point.

Etiquette – Care of the Course

Through the green, the player should repair any damage caused by spikes, tyres and any other type of assistive device. On the *putting green*, such damage should be repaired after all players in the group have completed the hole. Due to certain weather or turfgrass conditions, disabled golfers may be precluded, most often temporarily, from using certain types of assistive devices.

It is hoped that current research will result in the development of assistive devices that have minimal effect on agronomic conditions. It may also be necessary to re-educate the public regarding the true, rather than the perceived, impact of these devices on turfgrass.

Rule 6-7 (Undue Delay)

The interpretation and application of this particular Rule provides more than enough difficulty in dealing with able-bodied golfers by themselves. To suggest a mechanism by which this Rule should be applied to disabled golfers is equally as difficult. Clearly, there is enough subjectivity in determining what constitutes undue delay that considerable *Committee* discretion is required. In that regard, a slightly liberal interpretation of what constitutes undue delay is suggested when dealing with golfers with disabilities. Ultimately, each *Committee* must establish what it considers to be reasonable parameters in defining undue delay, taking into account the difficulty of the golf course, weather conditions and the quality of the field. To offer more specific guidance to the *Committee* is probably not realistic.

Handicapping

Although the R&A is not a handicapping authority, it is clear that, in establishing handicaps for disabled golfers, two issues manifest themselves immediately. The first issue is that adapting the relevant Handicap System for disabled golfers is impossible until an adaptation of the Rules of Golf has been agreed upon. Rule 28 (Ball Unplayable) and its application to a wheelchair golfer whose ball lies in a *bunker* serves as a useful example. Resolution of the handicap problem associated with this Rule will be necessary to eliminate the discrepancy when one disabled golfer establishes his handicap at a golf course with few bunkers while another disabled golfer of equal ability establishes his handicap at a golf course that is heavily bunkered.

The second issue concerns the type of handicap the disabled golfer should be given once the Rules of Golf and the relevant Handicap System have been adapted for use by disabled golfers – regular, provisional, local or some other restricted designation that has yet to be determined? The answer may vary from one Handicap System to another and will depend, at least in part, on how far the adapted Rules used by disabled golfers depart from the Rules of Golf.

Summary

This modification of the Rules of Golf for disabled golfers is intended to provide a means by which disabled golfers may play equitably with able-bodied golfers or other golfers with disabilities. Hopefully, all of the issues have been addressed, although it is anticipated that continued analysis and further modification will be necessary, as is the case for the Rules of Golf.



The activities of The R&A through all its areas of responsibility are detailed on www.randa.org. Keep up-to-date with the latest news of rules, championships, golf development and course management and discover the history and the facts and figures behind The R&A's worldwide role.

www.randa.org



The Open Championship website at www.opengolf.com not only covers the four rounds of the championship in words, pictures, video and statistics, it also runs year-round with an archive of past results, a wealth of information and regularly updated news.

www.opengolf.com



R&A

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