

## NEW DECISIONS

1-2/0.7	Meaning of “Sole Purpose of Caring for the Course”
1-2/3	Breaking Bush in Area into Which Ball May Roll After Drop
5-1/1.7	Status of Ball to Be Removed from List of Conforming Golf Balls
6-3a/5	Players Start Early
13-2/0.5	Meaning of “Improve” in Rule 13-2
13-4/9	Player Creates and Smooths Footprints in Bunker Prior to Making Stroke
13-4/9.5	Loose Impediment in Bunker Moved When Player Smooths Sand in Bunker for Sole Purpose of Caring for Course
14-3/0.7	Player Obtains Distance Information Measured with Electronic Device
14-3/17	Player Listens to Music or Broadcast During Round
14-5/2	Making Stroke at Oscillating Ball
16-1b/4	Ball Lifted from Putting Green by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor While Player’s Ball in Motion
18-2b/2	Ball Addressed in Hazard
18-2b/5	Ball Moves When Club Rested on Grass Immediately Behind Ball
26-1/1.3	When is it Necessary to Go Forward to Establish “Virtual Certainty”
33-8/37.5	Local Rule for Water Hazard with Bunker Adjacent
33-8/39.5	Local Rule Deeming Partially Grass-Covered Wall of Bunker to Be Part of Bunker
34-3/1.3	Competitor Incorrectly Advised to Cancel Stroke

### 1-2/0.7

#### Meaning of “Sole Purpose of Caring for the Course”

**Q.** What is the meaning of the phrase “sole purpose of caring for the course” in Exception 2 to Rule 1-2?

**A.** The phrase “sole purpose of caring for the course” in the Exception refers to the performance of acts that are encouraged in the Etiquette Section of the Rules of Golf provided they are taken at the appropriate time and in a manner permitted by the Rules. The provisions of Rule 1-2 do not prevent a player from taking acts that conform with the Etiquette Section, so long as the player does so for the sole purpose of caring for the course and without intentionally influencing the movement of a ball, or the

## 1-2/3

### Breaking Bush in Area into Which Ball May Roll After Drop

**Q.** A player elects to take relief from an area of ground under repair through the green. He correctly determines his nearest point of relief and the one club-length area in which the ball must be dropped under Rule 25-1b(i). The player is aware that there is a small bush located outside the dropping area. Fearing that his ball could come to rest close to the bush when dropped, without a re-drop being required under Rule 20-2c, the player intentionally breaks off and removes part of the bush. What is the ruling?

**A.** As the player has not improved the area in which a ball is to be dropped, (i.e. the area in which the ball must first strike a part of the course when dropped under Rule 25-1b(i)), Rule 13-2 does not apply. However, the player is in breach of Rule 1-2 for taking an action with the intent to affect the playing of the hole by altering the physical conditions.

The same principles apply to a situation where a player's ball is at rest, but he fears that it might move. For example, if a player's ball is at rest on a steep slope through the green and he breaks an attached tree branch that might interfere with his swing if the ball were to roll ten feet down the slope, the player is in breach of Rule 1-2 for taking an action with the intent to affect the playing of the hole by altering the physical conditions. (New)

## 5-1/1.7

### Status of Ball to Be Removed from List of Conforming Golf Balls

**Q.** A brand of ball included on the current List of Conforming Golf Balls is tested again and found not to conform to the specifications in Appendix III. The brand will therefore be deleted from the next List published. What is the status of the ball in the interim period?

**A.** Players are entitled to assume that all balls of a brand included on the current List of Conforming Golf Balls conform to the Rules. Therefore, players may continue to use balls of the brand in question until the publication of the next List, unless by a condition of the competition the Committee specifically excludes that brand. This applies whether or not it is a condition of the competition that only brands of golf balls on the List of Conforming Golf Balls may be used. (New)

## 6-3a/5

### Players Start Early

**Q.** In stroke play, A, B and C were scheduled to start at 9:00 am. All players were present at the 1st tee at 8:56 am. Without being given authority to do so by the Committee, A started at 8:58 am, B started at 8:59 am and C started at 9:00 am. What is the ruling?

**A.** Unless the Committee considers that the players have started early as a result of an error by the Committee or its representative, A and B are subject to a penalty of disqualification for failing to start at the scheduled time (see penalty statement under Rule 6-3a). However, in view of the fact that starting within five minutes after the time of starting results in a penalty of two strokes in stroke play under Rule 6-3a, the penalty for starting early, but within five minutes of the starting time, should be the same. Therefore, under Rule 33-7, the Committee should modify the disqualification penalty to two strokes, unless there is good reason not to do so, e.g. the players ignored a direct instruction from the Committee not to start before 9:00 am.

C incurs no penalty as he did start at 9:00 am, which was the time established by the Committee. (New)

## 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 gains 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 on his line of play five yards in front of his ball prior to making a 150-yard approach shot from through the green;
- 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 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 (e.g. a putt or a low-running shot);
- 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 gained a potential advantage from his actions is made by reference to the situation immediately prior to his stroke. If there is a reasonable possibility that the player's action has created a potential advantage, the player is in breach of Rule 13-2. (New)

### 13-4/9

#### Player Creates and Smooths Footprints in Bunker Prior to Making Stroke

**Q.** A player's ball lies in a bunker and a rake has been left in another part of the bunker. Prior to making his stroke in the bunker, the player retrieves the rake. Having lifted the rake, the player smooths the footprints that he has just created, and some others in the process. What is the ruling?

**A.** There is no penalty provided the smoothing was done for the sole purpose of caring for the course and nothing was done to breach Rule 13-2 in relation to the player's next stroke (see Exception 2 to Rule 13-4).

If, however, a player is regularly creating and smoothing footprints close to his ball prior to making strokes from bunkers, it would be appropriate to question the player about the purpose of the smoothing. In such circumstances, the smoothing might be for the purpose of gaining knowledge of the condition of the bunker rather than being for the sole purpose of caring for the course. If so, the player would be in breach of Rule 13-4a for testing the condition of the hazard. (New)

### 13-4/9.5

#### Loose Impediment in Bunker Moved When Player Smooths Sand in Bunker for Sole Purpose of Caring for Course

**Q.** A player's ball lies in a bunker. The player picks up a rake that is lying ten yards behind his ball and, solely for the purpose of caring for the course, smooths his footprints as he walks towards his ball. While raking his footprints, he also moves a loose impediment in the bunker. Is the player in breach of Rule 13-4c?

**A.** When a player's ball lies in a bunker, Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 allows a player to smooth sand in the bunker for the sole purpose of caring for the course provided nothing is done to breach Rule 13-2 with respect to his next stroke. Therefore, there is no breach of Rule 13-4c provided that (a) the movement of the loose impediment is incidental to the act permitted by the Rules (i.e. the raking of the footprints), and (b) the lie of the ball, area of intended stance or swing or line of play is not improved by moving the loose impediment. The player is not required to replace the loose impediment so moved. (New)

### 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. 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. 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 disqualified 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). (New)

### 14-3/17

#### Player Listens to Music or Broadcast During Round

**Q.** A player uses a device to listen to music, a radio broadcast or any other type of broadcast during a stipulated round. What is the ruling?

**A.** Under Rule 14-3a, a player may not use any artificial device or unusual equipment that “might assist him in making a stroke or in his play”. Listening to music or a broadcast while making a stroke or for a prolonged period might assist the player in his play, for example, by eliminating distractions or promoting a good tempo. Therefore, the use of an artificial device to listen to music or a broadcast, whether or not through headphones, while making a stroke or for a prolonged period of time during a stipulated round is a breach of Rule 14-3. However, it would not be a breach of Rule 14-3 for a player to listen to a device briefly, for example, to obtain the results of another sporting event or traffic information, while walking between the putting green of one hole and the teeing ground of the next hole.

A Committee will have to consider all available facts and circumstances in determining whether a player using an artificial device to listen to music or a broadcast has done so for a prolonged period such that the action might have assisted the player in his play.

There is no restriction on listening to music or other broadcasts while practicing (whether on the practice ground or on the golf course, and whether by oneself or while playing with others), although club rules and disciplinary codes could apply in such circumstances. (New)

#### 14-5/2

#### Making Stroke at Oscillating Ball

**Q.** A player’s ball lies on the putting green. The ball is oscillating because of the wind. May the player make a stroke at the ball while it oscillates?

**A.** Yes. As an oscillating ball is not moving as defined by the Rules of Golf, there is no penalty for making a stroke at an oscillating ball. The player must continue play without undue delay. (New)

#### 16-1b/4

#### Ball Lifted from Putting Green by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor While Player’s Ball in Motion

**Q.** A’s ball is on the putting green 20 yards from the hole. The ball of B, his opponent or fellow-competitor, is also on the putting green five yards to the right of the hole. A putts and, while the ball is in motion and still 15 yards from the hole, B marks and lifts his ball in order to clean it prior to making his stroke. A played a poor putt and his ball came to rest a yard short of B’s ball-marker. What is the ruling?

**A.** Under Rule 16-1b, B is penalised if lifting his ball might have influenced the movement of A's ball. The determination as to whether there is a reasonable possibility that B's ball might have influenced the movement of A's ball is made by reference to the situation at the time B lifted his ball.

In this case, as B's ball was lying some distance from A's intended line of putt and A's ball had only travelled a short distance at the time that B lifted his ball, it was reasonable for B to assume that the lifting of his ball would not influence the movement of A's ball, despite the fact that A's ball came to rest quite close to the spot from which B's ball was lifted.

When assessing the possibility that A's ball might have collided with B's ball and thus that, by lifting his ball, B might have influenced the movement of A's ball, the following are among the factors that should be taken into account:

- the distance of B's ball from A's line of putt
- the line on which A's ball was moving, and
- the contours of the putting green.

Any doubt as to whether there is a reasonable possibility that the lifting of the ball might have influenced the movement of the ball in motion is resolved against the player who lifted his ball. (New)

## 18-2b/2

### Ball Addressed in Hazard

**Q.** Can a player address his ball in a hazard?

**A.** As the definition of addressing the ball states that "the player has addressed the ball when he has grounded the club immediately in front of or immediately behind the ball, whether or not he has taken his stance", generally the player cannot address his ball in a hazard without incurring the general penalty under Rule 13-4. (New)

## 18-2b/5

### Ball Moves When Club Rested on Grass Immediately Behind Ball

**Q.** A player's ball is at rest. He rests his club on the grass immediately behind the ball and the ball moves. What is the ruling?

**A.** If the grass had been compressed to the point where it would support the weight of the club, the club is considered grounded. Therefore, the player has addressed the ball and Rule 18-2b applies. The player incurs a one-stroke penalty and must replace his ball unless it is known or virtually certain that some other agency (e.g. a dog or wind) caused the ball to move.

If the grass had not been compressed to the point where it would support the weight of the club, the player has not grounded his club and, therefore, has not addressed his ball. The player incurs no penalty under Rule 18-2b, but he is subject to penalty under Rule 18-2a if the player's actions caused the ball to move. (New)

### 26-1/1.3

#### When is it Necessary to Go Forward to Establish “Virtual Certainty”?

**Q.** Rule 26-1 requires there to be “knowledge or virtual certainty” before proceeding under the provisions of the Rule. In the absence of “knowledge” that a ball is in a water hazard, is it possible to establish the existence of “virtual certainty” without going forward to assess the physical conditions around the water hazard?

**A.** In the majority of cases, in order for it to be reasonably concluded that the ball does not lie anywhere outside the water hazard, it is necessary to go forward to assess the physical conditions around the hazard. However, there are situations where there will be sufficient evidence that the ball is in the hazard to establish “virtual certainty” without anyone having to go forward to review the physical conditions around the hazard.

In the following examples, the conclusion that it is “virtually certain” that the ball is in the water hazard would be justified without anyone going forward to the water hazard so that the player would be entitled to proceed under the provisions of Rule 26-1.

- It is a clear day, with good visibility. A player's ball is struck towards a water hazard, which has closely mown grass extending right up to its margin. The ball is observed to fall out of sight as it approaches the water hazard but is not seen actually to enter it. From a distance, it can be seen that there is no golf ball lying on the closely mown grass outside the hazard and, from both prior experience and a reasonable evaluation of current course conditions, it is known that the contour of the ground surrounding the hazard causes balls to enter the hazard. In such circumstances, it is reasonable for the conclusion to be reached from a distance that the ball must be in the water hazard.
- It is a clear day, with good visibility. A player's ball is struck towards an island putting green. The margin of the water hazard coincides with the apron of the putting green. Both from prior experience and a reasonable evaluation of current course conditions, it is understood that any ball that comes to rest on the apron or the putting green will be visible from where the stroke was made. In this instance, the

ball is observed to land on the putting green and roll out of sight. It is therefore concluded that the ball has carried over the green and into the water hazard. The player drops a ball in a dropping zone in front of the hazard, which has been provided by the Committee as an additional option to those under Rule 26-1, and plays to the green. When he arrives at the putting green, he discovers his original ball on the back apron of the green lying on a sunken sprinkler head. Nonetheless, in the

apron of the green lying on a sunken sprinkler head. Nonetheless, in the circumstances, it was reasonable for the conclusion to be reached from where the ball was last played that the ball must be in the water hazard.

In the following example, it cannot be established that there is “virtual certainty” that the ball is in the water hazard without going forward to assess the area surrounding the hazard.

- It is a clear day, with good visibility. A player’s ball is struck towards a water hazard, which has closely mown grass extending right up to its margin. The ball is observed travelling in the direction of the water hazard and it is known from prior experience that, with normal turf conditions, the ball would undoubtedly go into the water hazard. However, on this day, the fairways are wet and therefore it is possible that the ball could have embedded in the fairway and thus might not be in the water hazard. (New)

### 33-8/37.5

#### Local Rule for Water Hazard with Bunker Adjacent

**Q.** Due to the proximity of a bunker to the margin of a lateral water hazard, it is likely that a player, when dropping a ball under Rule 26-1c(i), will be required to drop a ball in the bunker.

Would it be permissible to place the line defining the lateral water hazard along the fairway side of the bunker (i.e. making the bunker part of the lateral water hazard), or alternatively, make a Local Rule to the effect that, when obtaining relief under the lateral water hazard Rule, the player may drop a ball to the fairway side of the bunker?

**A.** In all cases, the hazard should be marked along its natural boundary – see Decision 33-2a/4.

If the Committee does not wish to require a player to drop a ball in the bunker when proceeding under the lateral water hazard Rule, the Committee may establish a dropping zone or series of dropping zones on the fairway side of the bunker and make a Local Rule stating that a player whose ball is in the lateral water hazard (having last crossed the hazard margin between defined points) may drop a ball, under penalty of one stroke, in the nearest dropping zone that is not nearer the hole. (New)

### 33-8/39.5

#### Local Rule Deeming Partially Grass-Covered Wall of Bunker to Be Part of Bunker

**Q.** The bunkers on a course are designed to have earthen walls (not consisting of stacked turf), which are therefore intended to be part of the bunkers. However, parts of some of the bunker walls have become grass-covered. Under the Definition of “Bunker”, such grass-covered areas are through the green. In such a situation, may a Committee make a Local Rule deeming the “mixed” bunker walls to be part of the bunker?

**A.** Yes. Conversely, if the bunkers had been designed to have grass-covered walls, but some parts had worn bare, the Committee could deem the “mixed” bunker walls to be through the green and not part of the bunker. (New)

### 34-3/1.3

#### Competitor Incorrectly Advised to Cancel Stroke

**Q.** In stroke play, a competitor’s second stroke on a hole strikes the equipment of a player in another group. The competitor consults a referee before making his next stroke, and the referee incorrectly advises him that he must cancel and replay the stroke without penalty, which he does. Having replayed the stroke, the competitor then takes two more strokes to hole out. The competitor plays from the next tee and, prior to returning his score card, the referee’s error comes to light. What is the ruling?

**A.** The referee’s decision to require the competitor to cancel and replay the stroke stands. In such circumstances, the competitor’s score for the hole concerned would be 4. (New)