

Video Review Protocols for Televised Golf Competitions

In April 2017, The R&A and the USGA established a video review working group that included representatives from the PGA TOUR, LPGA, PGA European Tour, Ladies European Tour and PGA of America. The working group's comprehensive study of the use of video evidence in applying the Rules of Golf was completed in October 2017.

One of the outcomes of the study was an agreement on the new set of video protocols that are summarised in this document. All organisations that participated in the working group have agreed to use this approach to video review and recommend that it be used by other organisations that run televised golf competitions as well.

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1. Overall Standard for Using Information from Any Credible Source

When facts need to be decided in applying the Rules of Golf, players, referees and the Committee in charge of the competition will continue to consider information from any credible source, including:

- Witnesses on the course, such as other players, caddies, referees, marshals and spectators, and
- Video of the competition that is produced by the broadcast partner.

Consideration of all available evidence remains an essential part of applying the Rules of Golf, because many things happen during play of a round that cannot be seen by the players or referees. (See Decision 34-3/9 of the Decisions on the Rules of Golf for more information on the responsibility of referees and committees in deciding questions of fact.)

2. Protocols for the Review of Video Evidence

Although details of the Committee video review procedures may vary by organisation or by the nature of the competition, each organisation represented on the working group agrees to use these video review protocols:

a. Active monitoring of the video broadcast

The Committee will assign one or more of its officials to monitor the video broadcast. This monitoring role will include both:

- A proactive review to identify and help resolve potential Rules issues as they arise, and

- A responsive review when needed, such as to help referees on the course who ask for information on a real-time basis and to help the Committee when it is assessing issues based on something that happened at an earlier time.

This video monitoring should result in prompt identification and resolution of almost all Rules issues that can be seen in a video broadcast. It should also help minimise the number of times an issue arises that has not been seen and needs to be addressed at a later time.

b. No monitoring or review of communications from TV viewers

The Committee does not need or want outside intervention by viewers who believe they may have seen a Rules violation on the video broadcast.

Specifically, the Committee will not assign personnel or establish a procedure or practice to facilitate, monitor, review or follow up on viewer inquiries (such as phone calls, emails or texts) that seek to raise possible Rules violations.

Reviewing these “viewer call ins,” no matter how well intentioned they are, will not be part of the process of applying the Rules because they:

- Should be unnecessary given the Committee’s active video monitoring,
- Can be distracting to the officials in charge (as almost all of the issues reported by those who call in turn out to involve a misunderstanding of the Rules or the facts), and
- Create an unhealthy perception of random, inconsistent and/or improperly motivated outside intervention in applying the Rules.

If later information does come to the committee’s attention, such as from the video broadcast being seen by a player or someone working for the competition or from a general public source (such as the media), that information will still be considered as with any other available information. The fact that a potential Rules issue may have been missed during the video monitoring does not mean that the Committee will ignore the information.

c. Limitations on use of video evidence

The Committee’s use of evidence from the video broadcast will continue to be limited in the two important ways addressed in Decision 34-3/10 (which was recently adopted by The R&A and the USGA):

- A player’s reasonable judgment in making certain types of fact determinations will be accepted even if, after the player has made a stroke, video evidence shows that the player’s judgment might have been wrong, and

- Video evidence that shows facts that could not reasonably have been seen with the “naked eye” will be disregarded.

In addition, video that is brought to the Committee from a source other than the broadcast partner will not be accepted as “evidence” unless the Committee is convinced of its reliability.

In particular, this means that video from an individual’s camera, smartphone or similar device will not be used.