1-2/0.5 Serious Breach of Rule 1-2

Q. Should the standard for determining whether a serious breach of Rule 1-2 has occurred be the same in match play and stroke play?

A. In deciding whether a player has committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the Committee should consider all aspects of the incident. Given the different impact on players in match play and stroke play, it is possible for the same act to constitute a serious breach of Rule 1-2 in stroke play but not in match play. In many cases in match play (e.g. a player who intentionally stops his ball from entering a water hazard), a penalty of loss of hole is sufficient while in stroke play the player should be disqualified for a serious breach. In some cases (e.g., the purposeful act referred to in the first paragraph of the answer in Decision 17-3/2), a penalty of disqualification in match play is appropriate. (New)

1-2/8 Player Presses Down Turf as Ball Is Rolling Towards Area

Q. A player's ball lies through the green at the bottom of a slope. The player makes a stroke and sees that his ball is rolling back down the slope towards the spot from which he just played. Before the ball reaches that spot, the player presses down a raised piece of turf in that area with the intent of ensuring that his ball will not come to rest against the raise piece of turf or in the divot hole. Is the player in breach of Rule 1-2?

A. Yes, as he took an action with the intention to influence the movement of the ball.

If the player had not realized his ball was returning to the area, there would be no breach. (New)

1-4/8.5 Nearest Point of Relief from Cart Path Is in Casual Water, Nearest Point of Relief from Casual Water Is Back on Cart Path; Impracticable for Player to Drop Ball Into Area of Casual Water

Q. In the circumstances described in Decision 1-4/8, if the nature of the area of casual water were such that it was impracticable or impossible for the player to drop the ball, when taking relief from the cart path, into the area of casual water, how may the player proceed?

A. If it is impracticable for the player to proceed under one of the two Rules, he may, in equity (Rule 1-4), obtain relief without penalty as follows: Using the position of the ball on the cart path, the nearest point of relief from both the cart path and the casual water must be determined that is not in a hazard or on a putting green. The player must lift the ball and drop it within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than the nearest point of relief, on a part of the course that avoids interference by the cart path and the casual water and is not in a hazard or on a putting green.

It would be considered impracticable for the player to drop the ball in the area of casual water if the casual water were so deep that unreasonable effort would be required to retrieve a ball lying in this area of casual water – see Decision 25-1/1.

Other examples of conditions into which it would be considered impracticable for the player to drop the ball would include:

- in or under an immovable obstruction such that it would be extremely difficult or impossible to drop the ball (e.g., inside a locked building or beneath a rain-shelter that is raised off the ground).

- within a large hole made by a greenkeeper or similar area of ground under repair from which the player could not reasonably be expected to play a ball. (New)

2/2 Stipulated Round in Match Play

In all forms of match play other than threesomes and foursomes, a player has begun his stipulated round when he makes his first stroke in that round. In threesomes and foursomes match play, the side has begun its stipulated round when it makes its first stroke in that round.

The stipulated round has ended in match play when all of the players in the match have completed the final hole of the round (although a player may lodge a subsequent claim under Rule 2-5 or correct wrong information under Rule 9-2b(iii)). (New)

2-4/22 Players Agree to Concede Holes to Each Other

Q. Before or during a match, A and B agree to concede one or more holes to each other, thereby enabling them, in effect, to play a shorter match. If A and B know that such an arrangement is not permissible, are they subject to disqualification under Rule 1-3?

A. Yes. Although Rule 2-4 allows a player to concede a hole before playing it, an agreement between players to concede holes to each other exceeds this authority as it undermines the principle in Rule 2-1 of playing a stipulated round. Therefore, such an agreement constitutes an agreement to waive the Rules. (New)

3/3 Stipulated Round in Stroke Play

In all forms of stroke play other than foursomes, a competitor has begun his stipulated round when he makes his first stroke in that round. In foursomes stroke play, the side has begun its stipulated round when it makes its first stroke in that round.

In individual stroke play, the competitor's stipulated round has ended when he has completed play of the final hole of that round (including correction of an error under a Rule, e.g., Rule 15-3b or Rule 20-7c). In foursomes or four-ball stroke play, the stipulated round has ended when the side has completed play of the final hole of that round (including correction of an error under a Rule). (New)

6-2b/0.5 Meaning of "Handicap" When Full Handicap Not Used

Q. It is the condition of a stroke-play competition (e.g., four-ball) that players will not receive their full handicap allowances. Under Rule 6-2b, what is the player responsible for recording on his score card?

A. He must record his full handicap. It is the Committee's responsibility to apply the condition of competition to adjust his handicap. (New)

6-8d/5 Ball in Bad Lie in Rough Moved By Outside Agency During Suspension of Play; Player Fails to Estimate Position Sufficiently

Q. A player finds his ball in deep rough and the ball is barely visible. Before the player makes a stroke, the Committee suspends play, and the player discontinues play immediately without lifting his ball. During the suspension of play, an outside agency moves the player's ball. The player is made aware of the outside agency's actions and, on the resumption of play, the player estimates the spot where the ball originally lay and places a ball on that spot. However, the ball is placed on top of the grass in a much better lie than prior to the suspension of play. What is the ruling?

A. The Note to Rule 6-8d requires the player to estimate the spot where the ball is to be placed and to place the ball on the estimated spot. If the player places his ball in a lie that is significantly different from the original lie, the player has not estimated the position of the ball with sufficient accuracy. By placing the ball on top of the grass, the player placed the ball in the wrong place. If he makes a stroke from that spot without first correcting his error under Rule 20-6, he would be subject to penalty under Rule 20-7 for playing from a wrong place. (New)

8-1/26 Player Briefly Changes Caddies for Exchange of Advice

Q. In view of the fact that a player may change caddies during his stipulated round, may a player briefly change caddies for the purpose of receiving advice from the new caddie?

A. No. It would be contrary to the purpose and spirit of the Rules for a player to change caddies briefly for the purpose of circumventing Rule 8-1 (Advice). Therefore, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player would incur a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play for each hole at which the action occurred. (New)

10-3/1 Provisional Balls Played Out of Turn from Teeing Ground

Q. In match play, A has the honor and plays from the teeing ground, followed by his opponent, B. B, believing that his original ball may be out of bounds, plays a provisional ball while A stands by silently.

After B has played his provisional ball, A decides that, as his ball may be out of bounds or lost outside a water hazard, he will also play a provisional ball.

In view of the provisions in Rule 10-3, may A require B to cancel and replay his provisional ball?

A. No. When B played his provisional ball, he did not know that A would do so as well. A may play a provisional ball under these circumstances; however, he abandoned his right to recall B's stroke when he allowed B to play his provisional ball first. (New)

13-4/0.5 Meaning of "Test the Condition of the Hazard" in Rule 13-4a

Q. What is meant by "test the condition of the hazard" in Rule 13-4a?

A. The term covers all actions by which the player could gain more information about the hazard than could be gained from taking his stance for the stroke to be made, bearing in mind that a certain amount of digging in with the feet in the sand or soil is permitted when taking the stance for a stroke.

Examples of actions that would not constitute testing the condition of the hazard include the following:

- digging in with the feet for a stance, including for a practice swing, anywhere in the hazard or in a similar hazard;
- placing an object, such as clubs or a rake, in the hazard;
- leaning on an object (other than a club) such as a rake while it is touching the ground in the hazard or water in a water hazard;
- touching the hazard with an object (other than a club) such as a towel (touching with a club would be a breach of Rule 13-4b); or
- marking the position of the ball with a tee or otherwise when proceeding under a Rule.

Examples of actions that would constitute testing the condition of the hazard in breach of Rule 13-4a include the following:

- digging in with the feet in excess of what would be done for a stance for a stroke or a practice swing;
- filling in footprints from a previous stance (e.g., when changing stance to make a different type of stroke);
- intentionally sticking an object, such as a rake, into sand or soil in the hazard or water in a water hazard (but see Rule 12-1);
- smoothing a bunker with a rake, a club or otherwise (but see Exception 2 to Rule 13-4);
- kicking the ground in the hazard or water in a water hazard; or
- touching the sand with a club when making a practice swing in the hazard or in a similar hazard (but see Exception 3 to Rule 13-4). (New)

13-4/8 When Club Touches Ground in Grass in Water Hazard

Q. If a player's ball lies in a water hazard, when is his club in tall grass considered to be touching the ground in the water hazard, in breach of Rule 13-4b?

A. When the grass is compressed to the point where it will support the weight of the club (i.e., when the club is grounded). (New)

13-4/10 Committee Member Enters Bunker; Whether Player May Smooth Footprints

Q. A player whose ball lies in a bunker asks for a ruling from a member of the Committee, who enters the bunker to make the ruling. After the ruling, may the footprints of the member of the Committee be smoothed?

A. Normally, if a player allows an outside agency to enter a bunker where his ball lies, the player must accept any resultant worsening of the condition of the bunker. However, if a member of the Committee enters a bunker, in equity (Rule 1-4), the Committee member's footprints may be smoothed afterwards. The bunker may be restored by anyone. Any doubt as to whether certain footprints were made by the Committee member or another person should be resolved against the player, and the footprints in question should not be smoothed. (New)

14-3/6.5 Holding Ball in Hand Against Grip for Practice Swings or Practice Strokes

Q. Decision 14-3/6 clarifies that a player may not make a stroke while holding a golf ball in his hand against the grip to assist him. May the player make a practice swing or practice stroke (when permitted by Rule 7-2) while holding a golf ball in the same manner?

A. Yes. The prohibition in Rule 14-3 against using equipment in an unusual manner applies to strokes that count in the player's score and not to practice swings or practice strokes. (New)

14-3/15.5 Use of Swing Aid for Medical Reasons

While Exception 1 to Rule 14-3 authorizes a Committee to allow the use of a device for medical reasons, a Committee should not normally allow the use of a device originally designed as a swing aid, as such a device is likely to give a player an undue advantage over other players. (New)

14-4/3 Player Hits Behind Ball and Then Strikes Moving Ball

Q. In playing a chip shot, a player's club strikes the ground several inches behind the ball and does not come into contact with the ball. However, the ground is struck with enough force to cause the ball to move. The player's club continues and strikes the ball while it is moving. What is the ruling?

A. The player must count his stroke and add a penalty stroke under Rule 14-4.

Even though the club itself did not initially strike the ball, the ball was put into motion due to the stroke; therefore, Rule 14-4 applies. (New)

18-1/2 Status of Air When Artificially Propelled

Q. What is the status of air from a blower operated by an outside agency or from a fan?

A. Although the Definition of "Outside Agency" states that wind is not an outside agency, in this case the artificially-propelled air is considered to be an outside agency.

If such artificially-propelled air moves a ball at rest, Rule 18-1 applies. (New)

18-2a/20.5 Loose Impediment Dislodged by Player's Practice Swing Moves Ball

Q. In making a practice swing, a player dislodges a loose impediment (e.g. a stone), which causes his ball in play to move. What is the ruling?

A. The loose impediment is an outside agency; however, as the player's actions caused his ball in play to move, he incurs a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2a and must replace the ball.

If the loose impediment had moved the ball of another player, then the relevant part of Rule 18 would apply (e.g., Rule 18-3b in the case of an opponent's ball in play).

This ruling differs from that in Decision 18-1/8 as the loose impediment in this case was dislodged due to an optional act (a practice swing) rather than a necessary act (a stroke). (New)

18-2a/27.5 Player Who States He Will Proceed Under Unplayable Ball Rule Subsequently Assesses Possibility of Playing Ball as It Lies

Q. A player's ball is in a bad lie and in such a position that he considers that he may move the ball in breach of Rule 18-2a when he gets close to it. As provided in Decision 18-2a/27, the player may protect himself against penalty by stating that he will proceed under Rule 28. The player makes such an announcement, but, upon reaching the area where his ball lies and finding that the ball did not move, takes a club and begins to assess the possibility of playing the ball as it lies. What would be the ruling if the player then accidentally caused the ball to move?

A. Despite the fact that the player has stated that he intends to proceed under Rule 28, if it becomes clear from the player's actions that he is considering playing the ball as it lies, the Committee should rule that the player's intention to deem the ball unplayable has ceased and, therefore, the player would incur a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a if he thereafter caused his ball to move. (New)

19-2/9 Divot Taken After Stroke Strikes Ball in Motion

Q. A player has a short pitch shot to the green. He makes a stroke and, while the ball is still in motion, he makes a subsequent swing and takes a divot out of the ground with his club. The divot deflects or stops the moving ball. What is the ruling?

A. The player is deemed to have accidentally deflected or stopped his ball in motion. He incurs a penalty of one stroke and must play the ball as it lies (Rule 19-2). (New)

20-1/6.5 Ball-Marker Pressed Down by Opponent

Q. In a match, the player's ball-marker on the putting green is pressed down by the opponent. Is the opponent in breach of the Rules?

A. No. Rule 18-3b does not apply to ball-markers. However, if the ball-marker were moved such that it no longer accurately marked the position of the ball, in equity (Rule 1-4), the opponent would incur a penalty of one stroke. If the opponent pressed down the ball-marker with the authority of the player and that act caused it to move, there would be no penalty to either player (see Decision 20-1/6). (New)

20-2c/6 Player's Club Strikes Immovable Obstruction During Stroke After Relief Taken

Q. A player correctly determines the nearest point of relief from an artificially-surfaced path (immovable obstruction) and drops the ball within the area prescribed by Rule 24-2b. However, when the player makes the stroke, his club strikes the path. Is he subject to penalty under Rule 20-2c for not re-dropping the ball when there was still interference by the obstruction?

A. Yes. However, there would be no penalty if the reason that the club struck the obstruction was that the limits of the obstruction were not entirely known when relief was taken (e.g. part of the path was covered with turf) or the club traveled a significantly different path than originally intended due to an unexpected occurrence (e.g. because the player's feet slipped or he was stung by a bee). (New)

20-3a/3 Whether Ball Must Be Replaced If Other Rule Applies

Q. If a Rule requires a ball at rest that was moved to be replaced (e.g., Rule 18-2a), must the player replace the ball if he wishes to proceed under another Rule that involves dropping or placing the ball in another place (e.g., Rule 24-2)?

A. No. If a player is proceeding under a Rule that requires him to replace the ball but another Rule applies, he may proceed directly under the other Rule. The ruling would be the same even if the original spot were not known, in which case the estimated position of the ball would be the reference point for proceeding under the other Rule. (New)

20-3b/4 Lie of Ball Through the Green Altered; Original Lie of Ball Known but Spot Where Ball Lay Not Determinable

Q. In stroke play, B plays A's ball, which was lying through the green, and in the process removes a divot. The original lie of A's ball was known and has been altered. It is impossible to determine the exact spot where A's ball originally lay. Should A proceed under Rule 20-3b or Rule 20-3c?

A. As A knew the original lie of the ball, Rule 20-3b overrides Rule 20-3c. The spot where the ball lay will need to be estimated, and a ball must be placed in the nearest lie most similar to the original lie that is not more than one club-length from the estimated spot, not nearer the hole and not in a hazard. (New)

20-3b/6 Lie of Ball in Bunker Altered; Original Lie of Ball Known but Spot Where Ball Lay Not Determinable

Q. At B's request, A has marked the position of and lifted his ball in a bunker under Rule 22-2 as it interfered with B's stroke. B makes his stroke and, in the process, accidentally moves A's ball-marker. The original lie of A's ball was known and has been altered. It is impossible to determine the exact spot where A's ball originally lay. Should A proceed under Rule 20-3b or Rule 20-3c?

A. As A knew the original lie of the ball, Rule 20-3b overrides Rule 20-3c. The original lie of the ball must be recreated as nearly as possible in its original spot (which will need to be estimated), and the ball must be placed in that lie. (New)

24-2b/15.5 Door of Building in Open or Closed Position

Q. A player's ball lies through the green and near the open door of a building on the course (immovable obstruction). When open, the door interferes with the player's area of intended swing, but when the door is closed the player does not have interference from the door or building. How may the player proceed?

A. With the door in the open position in which he found it, the player has interference, as defined by Rule 24-2a, from an immovable obstruction; therefore, he is entitled to relief without penalty in accordance with Rule 24-2b. Additionally, as the door is designed to be movable, the player may move the door to any other position to eliminate interference (see Decisions 24-2b/14 and 24-2b/15).

If the player did not have interference from the door, he was not entitled to move the door to another position for the purpose of giving himself interference under Rule 24-2a. (New)

26/1.5 Status of Ball That Touches Water Hazard and Another Part of the Course

Q. A player's ball touches the line defining the margin of a water hazard but also touches another part of the course (e.g. a bunker or the putting green). On which part of the course is the player's ball considered to lie?

A. The player's ball is considered to lie in the water hazard. (New)

26-1/3.7 Ball Dropped Under Water Hazard Rule Without It Being Known or Virtually Certain Ball in Hazard; Original Ball Then Found

Q. A player's ball is struck towards a water hazard and is not found. It is neither known nor virtually certain that the player's ball is in the water hazard, but he drops a ball under Rule 26-1b. Before he plays the dropped ball, his original ball is found within the five-minute search period. What is the ruling?

A. It was neither known nor virtually certain that the player's ball was in the water hazard when he put the substituted ball into play, and, therefore, that ball was incorrectly substituted under an inapplicable Rule.

The player must correct his error under Rule 20-6 by abandoning the substituted ball and continuing play with the original ball. If the original ball was found inside the water hazard, the player may proceed under Rule 26-1.

If the player failed to correct his improper procedure and played the dropped ball, he has proceeded under an inapplicable Rule and incurred a penalty (see Decision 34-3/6). The ruling would be that the player has proceeded under Rule 27-1 (the only Rule that applied to his situation), incurring the one-stroke penalty under that Rule. Additionally, as he played the ball from a wrong place (i.e. a place not permitted by Rule 27-1), he incurred the general penalty, loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play, for a breach of Rule 27-1. In stroke play, the Committee must determine whether the player committed a serious breach when he played from the wrong place (Rule 20-7c). (New)

29-1/4.5 Play of Provisional Ball in Foursomes When Partner Has Already Gone Ahead

Q. A and B are partners in foursome play. It is A's turn to play from the teeing ground, and B walks ahead to where he thinks the ball might land. A's tee shot comes to rest in an area where it may not be found. Without searching for the original ball, B immediately returns to the tee with the intention of playing a provisional ball, by which time A has walked forward a considerable distance towards the original ball in the knowledge that it may be lost. Rule 27-2a prohibits the play of a provisional ball after the player or his partner has gone forward to search for the original ball. As a result of A having gone forward to search, is B prohibited from playing a provisional ball under Rule 27-2a?

A. Rule 27-2a does not contemplate such a case and, in view of the fact that the purpose of Rule 27-2 is to enable players to save time and that B's desire and actions to play a provisional ball in such a case are consistent with this purpose, B is permitted to play a provisional ball, provided the original ball has not been found. However, the five-minute period for search for the original ball commences as soon as A has begun to search for it. (New)

31/1 Examples of Rulings in Four-Ball Stroke Play with Concurrent Individual Competition

When competitors are involved in concurrent stroke-play competitions, whenever possible the Rules are applied only to the competition affected. When it is not possible to separate the competitions, the four-ball competition takes precedence. The exception to that is with Rule 8-1 (Advice), as the two partners may not exchange advice if both are playing in the individual competition; if just one of them is playing in the individual competition, they may exchange advice.

A and B are partners in four-ball stroke play, and they are concurrently playing in an individual stroke-play competition. The following are examples of the application of the Rules in such a format:

(1) B moves A's ball without authority under the Rules. In the four-ball competition A incurs a penalty stroke (Rule 18-2a), but he incurs no penalty in the individual competition. B incurs no penalty in either competition.

(2) On the 3rd hole it is discovered that B started his round with 15 clubs. In the four-ball competition Side A-B incurs a total penalty of four strokes (two strokes on each of the first two holes), but A incurs no penalty in the individual competition. B incurs a total penalty of four strokes in the individual competition.

(3) During the round B makes a stroke at a non-conforming ball. In the four-ball competition Side A-B is disqualified (Rules 5-1 and 31-7a), but A incurs no penalty in the individual competition. B is disqualified from the individual competition. (New)

33-7/9 Competitor Who Knows Player Has Breached Rules Does Not Inform Player or Committee in Timely Manner

The responsibility for knowing the Rules lies with all players. In stroke play, the player and his marker have an explicit responsibility for the correctness of the player's score card.

There may, however, be exceptional individual cases where, in order to protect the interests of every other player in the competition, it would be reasonable to expect a fellow-competitor or another competitor to bring to light a player's breach of the Rules by notifying the player, his marker or the Committee.

In such exceptional circumstances, it would be appropriate for the Committee to impose a penalty of disqualification under Rule 33-7 on a fellow-competitor or another competitor if it becomes apparent that he has failed to advise the player, his marker or the Committee of a Rules breach with the clear intention of allowing that player to return an incorrect score. (New)

33-8/6 Local Rule for Breach of Sportsmanship Code or Competition Policy

Q. May a Committee make a Local Rule assessing a penalty for breach of a sportsmanship code (e.g., for offensive language) or of a competition policy (e.g. for use of a mobile phone when such use is prohibited)?

A. No. A Local Rule assessing a penalty for a breach of a sportsmanship code or competition policy is not authorized. Penalties for breaches of such items should take a more generalized form, e.g., censure, suspension or revocation of the privilege of playing in events.

However, a Committee may disqualify a player under Rule 33-7 for a serious breach of etiquette - see Decision 33-7/8. (New)

33-8/45 Local Rule Treating Temporary Immovable Obstructions as Immovable Obstructions or Temporary Immovable Obstructions

Q. May a Committee make a Local Rule stating that a player may, at his option, treat a temporary immovable obstruction (TIO) either as an immovable obstruction (in which case Rule 24-2 applies) or a TIO (in which case the Local Rule for TIOs applies)?

A. Yes. (New)

34-2/7 Correction of Incorrect Ruling by Referee in Match Play

Q. In singles match play, the players obtain a ruling from the referee, and the referee incorrectly advises one of the players that he has incurred a loss of hole penalty. Both players lift their balls and walk to the next tee. The referee then learns of the incorrect ruling. Should the referee correct the error?

A. If neither player has made a stroke from the next teeing ground or, in the case of the last hole of the match, if the result of the match has not been officially announced, in equity (Rule 1-4), the referee must correct the error. The referee must direct the players to replace their balls and complete the hole, with the correct ruling applied. Otherwise, it is too late to correct the error and the loss of hole penalty must stand. (New)

34-3/3.7 Player Incorrectly Advised to Continue with Provisional Ball

Q. In stroke play, a player's tee shot is struck towards an area of trees, bushes and tall grass. Believing his ball might be lost outside a water hazard, the player announces his intention to play a provisional ball and plays a ball from the tee. When he arrives at the area, he finds that his ball is in a lateral water hazard. A member of the Committee incorrectly tells the player that a provisional ball is not allowed in such circumstances and, therefore, the second ball has become the ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance. The player continues with the second ball, taking three additional strokes to finish the hole, and plays from the next tee. The Committee then learns of this incorrect ruling. What score should it assign to the player for the hole?

A. As the player played the second ball from the tee in the belief that his original ball might have been lost outside a water hazard, that ball was a provisional ball, and the player should have abandoned it and continued with the original ball (Rule 27-2c).

By directing the player to continue with the provisional ball, the member of the Committee had the player play a wrong ball. However, the player incurs no penalty under Rule 15-3b for playing a wrong ball as he did so at the instruction of a member of the Committee.

The Committee should determine that the player's score for the hole is 4: his tee shot with the original ball plus the three strokes made with the wrong ball after the incorrect ruling. However, if it would have been clearly unreasonable for the player to play the original ball as it lay in the water hazard, he must, in equity (Rule 1-4), add one penalty stroke under Rule 26-1 to his score. (New).

34-3/3.9 Committee Makes Incorrect Ruling Under Rule 3-3; Whether Ruling May Be Corrected

Q. In stroke play, a competitor plays two balls (X and Y) under Rule 3-3. When he reports the facts to the Committee before returning his score card, the Committee determines that he must score with Ball Y. Subsequently, the Committee realizes it made an incorrect ruling and that the score with Ball X should have been the competitor's score for the hole. May the Committee correct this mistake?

A. Such a mistake is an incorrect ruling and not an administrative error. Therefore Rule 34 applies and the answer depends on when the Committee learns of its incorrect ruling.

If the Committee learns of the incorrect ruling before the competition closes, it should correct the ruling without penalty to the competitor by changing his score for the hole in question to that with Ball X (Decision 34-3/1).

If the Committee learns of the incorrect ruling after the competition has closed, the score with Ball Y must remain the competitor's score for the hole in question. Under Rule 34-3, such a ruling is final once the competition has closed. (New)

34-3/9 Resolution of Questions of Fact; Referee and Committee Responsibility

Resolving questions of fact is among the most difficult actions required of a referee, an individual Committee member or the Committee as a whole. For example, these situations include a broad array of incidents such as determining whether a player caused a ball to move (Decisions 18/10, 18-2a/30 and 18-2a/30.5), whether a player played from outside the teeing ground (Decision 34-3/4), whether a stroke was made (Decision 14/1.5), the hole at which a wrong ball was played (Decision 15-1/3) and the state of a match (Decision 34-3/5).

In all situations involving questions of fact, resolution of the doubt must be made in light of all the relevant circumstances and evaluation of the weight of the evidence, including the balance of probabilities where applicable (Decision 15-1/3). When the Committee is unable to determine the facts to its satisfaction, it must resolve the matter in the fairest way (Decision 34-3/5).

Testimony of the players involved is important and must be given due consideration. In some situations where the facts are not decisive, the doubt should be resolved in favor of the player (Decisions 15-1/2 and 19-1/4.1); in others, the doubt should be resolved against the player (Decision 13-4/35.5 and 21/3). There is no hard-and-fast rule for evaluating the testimony of the players or for assigning the weight to be given to such testimony and each situation must be treated on its own merits. The proper action depends on the circumstances in each case and must be left to the judgment of the referee, Committee member or the Committee as a whole.

Testimony of those who are not a part of the competition, including spectators, must be accepted and evaluated (Decision 27/12). It is also appropriate to use television footage and the like to assist in resolving doubt.

It is important that any questions of fact be resolved in a timely manner such that the competition may proceed in an orderly way. Thus, the referee in match play or Committee member in stroke play may be limited to evaluating the evidence available to him in a timely manner. Any such ruling is always subject to further review by the referee, Committee member or Committee as a whole as additional evidence becomes available.

If a judgment is made by a referee or Committee member, the player is entitled to proceed on the basis of that ruling whether it is an interpretation of the Rules of Golf (Decision 34-3/1.5) or a resolution of a question of fact (Decision 34-3/7). In situations arising in both circumstances, if the ruling is found to be incorrect, the Committee may have the authority to make a correction (Decisions 34-3/1 and 34-3/7). However, in all circumstances, including both match play and stroke play, the referee or Committee is limited in its ability to make corrections by the guidance contained in Decisions 34-2/5, 34-2/6, 34-2/7, 34-3/3 and 34-3/3.3. (New)

USGA/6-2/100 Meaning of "Handicap"
Q. A player's Handicap Index is 4.8. On the course to be played in the competition, the player's Course Handicap is 6. Which is his "handicap" for the purposes of Rule 6-2?

A. 6. In a stroke-play competition the player must ensure that the handicap for the course which he is to play (i.e., from the set of tees to be used by him in the competition) is recorded on his score card when it is returned to the Committee. (New)

USGA/8-1/100 Advice in Team Competitions Among Educational Institutions
In a team competition among educational institutions in which the conditions of competition do not permit the use of caddies, the Committee may adopt a modification of the Note to Rule 8 providing that each team may appoint up to two persons who may give advice to members of that team, notwithstanding that the Note contemplates only one such person. (New)