

1-3/0.5 When Breach of Rule 1-3 Occurs

Q. While walking to the 1st green, A and B agree that for a ball that is out of bounds they will drop a ball at the spot where the ball went out of bounds under penalty of one stroke, even though they know the penalty is stroke and distance. Someone overhears this conversation and advises A and B that they may not make such an arrangement. Neither player has yet hit a ball out of bounds. What is the ruling?

A. A and B are disqualified under Rule 1-3 for agreeing to waive the penalty under Rule 27-1b.

Even though A and B had not yet acted on the agreement, they were in breach of Rule 1-3 as soon as the agreement was reached during the stipulated round.

In match play, if the players in a match agree to waive the Rules before their stipulated round, they are in breach of Rule 1-3 if either of them starts the stipulated round without having canceled the agreement.

In stroke play, if competitors agree to waive the Rules before their stipulated round, each competitor is in breach of Rule 1-3 if one competitor who was part of the agreement starts his stipulated round without having canceled the agreement. (New)

1-4/11.5 Player Wraps Towel Around Self or Places Towel on Cactus Before Taking Stance

Q. A player's ball lies near a cactus, and to play the ball the player would have to stand with his legs touching the cactus. To protect himself from the cactus needles, the player wraps a towel around his legs before taking his stance. He then plays the ball. What is the ruling?

A. Provided the player does not breach Rule 13-2 (i.e., he takes his stance fairly), there is no breach of the Rules.

However, if the player were to place the towel on the cactus, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play. (New)

2/3 Refusal to Comply with Rule in Match Play

Q. In a match, A requests B to lift B's ball that is on A's line of play. B refuses to do so. What is the ruling?

A. In equity (Rule 1-4), B loses the hole for failing to comply with A's request to lift his ball under Rule 22-2. (New)

2-4/3.5 Stroke Conceded by Caddie

Q. In a match between A and B, B's caddie purports to concede A's next stroke,

whereupon A lifts his ball. What is the ruling?

A. As a player's caddie does not have the authority to make a concession, the purported concession is invalid. As A had reasonably believed his next stroke had been conceded, in equity (Rule 1-4), A incurs no penalty and must replace the ball. B incurs no penalty; however, had B's caddie lifted A's ball, B would have incurred a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-3b. (New)

4-1/1 Condition Requiring Clubs Conforming with Groove and Punch Mark Specifications Effective January 1, 2010

A Committee that wishes to limit players to clubs manufactured with grooves and/or punch marks that conform to all aspects of the Rules of Golf, including those that are effective from January 1, 2010, may adopt the condition of competition detailed below.

Between January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2014, it is recommended that this condition of competition be adopted only for competitions involving the highest level of expert player. After January 1, 2014, this condition of competition may be adopted more widely (e.g., at the highest level of amateur golf), but it is recommended only for competitions involving expert players.

“The player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Rules of Golf that are effective from January 1, 2010.

***PENALTY FOR CARRYING, BUT NOT MAKING STROKE WITH, CLUB OR CLUBS IN BREACH OF CONDITION:**

Match play – At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round - Two holes.

Stroke play – Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round - Four strokes.

Match or stroke play – In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.

Bogey and par competitions – See Note 1 to Rule 32-1a.

Stableford competitions – See Note 1 to Rule 32-1b.

*Any club or clubs carried in breach of this condition must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his marker or a fellow-competitor in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a breach has occurred. If the player

fails to do so, he is disqualified.

**PENALTY FOR MAKING STROKE WITH CLUB IN BREACH OF
CONDITION: Disqualification.**

Exception: Clubs manufactured before March 31, 1990 that meet the criteria of USGA Decision USGA/4-1/100, such as the Ping Eye 2 irons, will be permitted for play when the above Condition Requiring Clubs Conforming with Groove and Punch Mark Specifications Effective January 1, 2010 is in effect.”

(New)

4-4a/15 Assembly of Club Components During Stipulated Round

Q. In addition to his clubs selected for play, a player begins his stipulated round with a clubhead and a shaft that are capable of being assembled into a club. What is the ruling?

A. A separate clubhead and shaft do not constitute a club. Therefore, the separate clubhead and shaft do not count towards the number of clubs the player may carry under Rule 4-4a. However, regardless of the number of clubs carried, it is not permissible to assemble a clubhead and shaft carried by the player during the stipulated round. If the player replaces or adds a club by assembling components carried by him during the round, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player would be penalized in accordance with the penalty statement under Rule 4-3a or Rules 4-4a and b, as applicable. (New)

4-4a/16 Status of Additional Clubs Being Carried for Player and of Person Carrying Them

Q. A player begins his stipulated round with ten clubs carried by his caddie. The player has also asked another person to walk along with the group and carry eight more clubs. During the round, the player intends to add from the clubs carried by the other person. Is such an arrangement permissible?

A. No. As the player intends to add from such clubs during the round, the eight clubs count towards his total. The player is, therefore, in breach of Rule 4-4a for starting the stipulated round with more than 14 clubs. In addition, the other person is acting as a second caddie in breach of Rule 6-4.

As different acts have resulted in two Rules being breached, multiple penalties would apply (see Principle 5 of Decision 1-4/12). (New)

13-4/0.7 Player Rakes Bunker When Ball Lies in Another Bunker

Q. A player’s ball lies through the green, and he plays the ball into a bunker. Before playing from the bunker, he smoothes footprints in a different bunker. As the player

had not played from the bunker he raked, Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 did not apply. Is the player in breach of Rule 13-4a?

A. The answer depends on the circumstances.

Even though Decision 13-4/0.5 states that raking is a form of testing the condition of a hazard, it is not the intent of Rule 13-4a to prohibit players from practicing the proper etiquette of the game. Therefore, when the player's ball lies in a bunker, it is not a breach of the Rules if the player smoothes the sand in another bunker, provided (a) the smoothing is for the purpose of tidying up the bunker, (b) the smoothing does not breach Rule 13-2 with respect to his next stroke and (c) there is not a reasonable possibility that the smoothing could affect a subsequent stroke by the player.

If the player smoothes sand in the bunker in which his ball lies prior to making his first stroke in that bunker, he is in breach of Rule 13-4a. (New)

14-2/0.5 Meaning of "Elements"

Q. What are considered "elements" under Rule 14-2a?

A. Elements include sunlight, rain, wind, snow and other weather conditions. (New)

14-2/2.5 Player Positions Bag for Purpose of Providing Shade for Ball

Q. A player positions his golf bag near the teeing ground for the purpose of blocking the sunlight from the position where he tees his ball. He then makes a stroke. Is he in breach of Rule 14-2?

A. Yes. As the player was not in contact with the golf bag, he accepted protection from the elements in breach of Rule 14-2. This answer differs from that in Decision 14-2/2 as, in that case, the player was in contact with the umbrella.

While a player may not place an object or position a person for the purpose of blocking the sunlight from his ball, he may ask a person (e.g., a spectator) who is already in position not to move, so that a shadow remains over the ball, or to move, so that his shadow is not over the ball. (New)

14-3/10.3 Use of Rod During Round for Alignment or as Swing Aid

Q. During a stipulated round, a player uses a rod to check his alignment or his swing plane. What is the ruling?

A. The player is disqualified under Rule 14-3 as the rod is unusual equipment and such use, during the stipulated round, is not permitted.

Carrying the rod is not, of itself, a breach of a Rule. (New)

19-2/10 Ball Stopped or Deflected by Rake Held by Player's Caddie

Q. A player's ball lies in a bunker. He plays, and his ball is accidentally stopped or

deflected by a rake that is being held by his caddie. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. Items such as rakes that are placed on the course for general use are not part of the player's equipment and remain outside agencies at all times. (New)

19-5/1.5 Ball Lifted and Replaced; Ball Then Rolls and Strikes Ball on Putting Green

Q. In stroke play, after a stroke from the putting green, a competitor marks the position of and lifts his ball from the putting green. After he replaces the ball at rest, and before he addresses it, the ball rolls and strikes his fellow-competitor's ball, which was lying on the putting green. Is the player in breach of Rule 19-5a?

A. No. The competitor incurs no penalty and must play the ball from its new position. After the competitor had lifted and replaced his ball, any subsequent movement is not considered to be "after a stroke" for the purposes of Rule 19-5a. (New)

20-2a/8 Player Drops Ball to Determine Where Original Ball May Roll if Dropped

Q. A player's ball lies on an artificially surfaced path. The player determines his nearest point of relief and measures the one club-length in which the ball may be dropped under Rule 24-2b. As the player is concerned that the ball, when dropped, may roll into an unplayable lie, he takes a ball from his bag and drops it in the area to test where his original ball may roll to if he elects to take relief from the path. He did not intend to put the second ball into play. What is the ruling?

A. As the player had no intention of putting the dropped ball into play, that ball did not become the ball in play, and his original ball on the path remained the ball in play. However, it is contrary to the purpose and spirit of the Rules for a player to test what may happen when he drops his ball. Therefore, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. In stroke play, the player may play the original ball as it lies on the path or take relief under Rule 24-2. (New)

20-3b/7 Whether Original Lie May Be "Nearest Lie Most Similar"

Q. A player finds a ball he believes to be his lying in a water hazard. When he lifts the ball for identification under Rule 12-2, the original lie is altered. When proceeding under Rule 20-3b, if the altered lie is the nearest lie most similar to the original lie within one club-length of the original lie not nearer the hole and inside the water hazard, is the player required to replace the ball in the original lie in its altered condition?

A. Yes. Although in most situations the nearest most similar lie within one club-length will be located elsewhere, there may be circumstances when the nearest lie most similar to the original lie will be the original lie in its altered condition. (New)

20-3b/8 Loose Impediment Affecting Lie of Ball Moved

Q. A's ball lies in a bunker, with a loose impediment immediately behind the ball. The ball of B, his opponent or fellow-competitor, lies near A's ball in the same bunker, but farther from the hole. B asks A to lift his ball under Rule 22-2, which A does. B's stroke moves the loose impediment that was behind A's ball. Is A's lie considered to have been altered as a result of the removal of the loose impediment, in which case Rule 20-3b would apply?

A. No. Loose impediments are not part of the lie of the ball as contemplated by Rule 20-3b. Therefore, A is not required to replace the loose impediment before his next stroke. If he did replace the loose impediment, there would be no penalty.

The same answer would apply on any part of the course. (New)

25-1b/25.5 Application of Exception to Rule 25-1b When Ball Lies Underground in Burrowing Animal Hole

Q. Through the green, a player's ball comes to rest underground in a hole made by a burrowing animal. A large bush is immediately next to and overhanging the entrance to the hole. Given the Exception to Rule 25-1b, is the player entitled to relief without penalty from the burrowing animal hole?

A. For the purpose of applying the Exception to Rule 25-1b, a ball lying underground in a burrowing animal hole is deemed to lie at the entrance to the hole. If the nature of the area surrounding the entrance to the hole is such that it is clearly unreasonable for the player to make a stroke at a ball lying at any part of the entrance to the hole (e.g., because of the overhanging bush), the player is not entitled to relief without penalty under Rule 25-1b. Otherwise, the player is entitled to relief without penalty under Rule 25-1b.

If the ball lies in a hole, but is not underground, it is the position of the ball, rather than the entrance to the hole, which is relevant in determining whether the Exception to Rule 25-1b applies. (New)

27/17 Competitor Plays Out of Turn Other Than from Teeing Ground and Puts Another Ball into Play at Spot of Previous Stroke

Q. In stroke play, a competitor whose ball lay through the green played out of turn. He should have continued play with the ball played out of turn without penalty, but he mistakenly believed he needed to cancel and replay the stroke in the correct order. The competitor dropped another ball at the spot from which he made that stroke, but his action was questioned before he played the dropped ball. What is the ruling?

A. As the dropped ball was not dropped with the intention of putting it into play under penalty of stroke and distance, the original ball was not lost. As the competitor had put a ball into play under an inapplicable Rule but not played it, Rule 20-6 applies, and the player may correct his error by continuing play with the original ball, without penalty.

Had the competitor played the dropped ball, he would have been considered to have played under penalty of stroke and distance (Rule 27-1a) and the original ball would be lost. (New)

27-2a/1.3 Player Intends to Play Provisional Ball but No One Present to Hear Announcement

Q. In stroke play, A hits his tee shot into the trees. After a search of five minutes, he does not find his ball and returns to the tee to play a second ball under Rule 27-1c. He hits the second tee shot into the trees as well. He intends to play a provisional ball, but his two fellow-competitors are well down the fairway and unable to hear an announcement from A of his intention. How should he proceed?

A. Rule 27-2a does not contemplate the absence of an opponent, marker or fellow-competitor when the player intends to play a provisional ball. In this case, in the interest of not delaying play A is considered to have fulfilled the announcement requirements of Rule 27-2a if he informs his marker or fellow-competitor as soon as practicable that he has played a provisional ball. (New)

29/5.5 Raking Sand in Bunker After Partner Fails to Extricate Ball but Before Stroke; Foursome Match

Q. In a foursome match, A and B are partners. A plays a bunker shot, but fails to get the ball out of the bunker. Before making the next stroke, B rakes the sand. What is the ruling?

A. In a foursome match, the word “player” includes his partner, where the context so admits — see Definition of “Partner.” In these circumstances, Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 applies to both the player and his partner. Therefore, Side A-B does not incur any penalty for B’s raking of the sand. (New)

30-3/3 Application of Rule 2-2 in Four-Ball Match Play

The second paragraph of Rule 2-2 does not apply in four-ball match play. (New)

30-3e/1 Partners Fail to Discontinue Play Immediately Contrary to Condition of Competition

Q. A and B are playing C and D in a four-ball match for which the Committee has adopted the condition of competition, authorized by the Note to Rule 6-8b, requiring players to discontinue play immediately in potentially dangerous situations. The Committee suspends play for a potentially dangerous situation and the players have heard the signal for that suspension. A and B play, and C and D make a claim. What is the ruling?

A. A and B are disqualified.

In four-ball play, when a player is in breach of a condition of competition authorized under a specific Rule, that breach is deemed to come under the appropriate Rule (Rule 6-8 in this case). Both A and B were in breach of the condition of competition and are disqualified — Rule 30-3e(ii).

In four-ball stroke play, Side A-B is disqualified — Rule 31-7b(i). (New)

30-3f/2.5 Touching Sand with Practice Swing After Partner Has Extricated Ball from Bunker; Four-Ball Match

Q. In a four-ball match, A and B are partners. The balls of A and B lie in the same bunker. A plays a bunker shot and extricates his ball, but it comes to rest in another bunker. Before B makes his stroke in the bunker, B makes a practice swing, touching the sand in the bunker. Is B exempt from penalty by virtue of Exception 3 to Rule 13-4?

A. No. In a four-ball match, the word “player” includes his partner, where the context so admits — see Definition of “Partner.” However, in four-ball play, as each partner is playing his own ball, Exception 3 to Rule 13-4 applies only to the player whose ball has been extricated from the bunker. Therefore, while A does not incur any penalty, B is disqualified from the hole (Rules 13-4 and 30-3f). (New)

30-3f/13 Partner Stands on Extension of Player’s Line of Play Behind Ball

Q. A and B are partners in a four-ball competition. A’s ball is on the putting green 30 feet from the hole, and B’s ball is 20 feet from the hole on a similar line. To assist him with his own putt, B stands on an extension of the line of putt behind A’s ball while A putts. What is the ruling?

A. A was in breach of Rule 14-2b by allowing his partner, B, to position himself on or close to an extension of the line of putt behind the ball while he made his stroke. As A’s breach assisted B, B also incurred the same penalty (Rules 30-3f and 31-8).

In match play, Side A-B loses the hole.

In stroke play, A incurs a penalty of two strokes and B incurs the same penalty. (New)

33-2b/1.5 Committee Wishes to Move Hole During Stroke-Play Round Due to Severity of Location

Q. During a round in a stroke-play competition, the Committee discovers that one of the holes is positioned such that the ball will not stop near the hole due to the severity of the slope at the hole. As a result, the majority of players who have played the hole have taken an excessive number of putts to hole out. What are the Committee’s options in such circumstances?

A. There is no good solution in such a case, and the Committee, taking into account all

factors (e.g., how severe the hole location is, how many players have completed play of the hole and where the hole is in the round), should take the course of action that it considers to be the fairest to all the players. In the circumstances described, the following are examples of actions the Committee may take:

- (a) Have play continue with the hole location unchanged on the basis that the conditions are the same for all players in the field;
- (b) Keep the hole in the same location but take some action, e.g., watering the putting green between groups, to make the hole location less severe;
- (c) Declare the round null and void and have all players start the round again;
- (d) Suspend play, relocate the hole and have the players who played the hole return at the conclusion of their rounds to replay the hole. The score for the hole for these players is the score achieved when the hole is replayed;
- (e) Have all players disregard their score for the hole in question and play another hole (whether on the competition course or elsewhere) for their score for the hole.

Options (d) and (e) should be taken only in extreme circumstances because they alter the stipulated round for some or all players. (New)

33-8/34 Relief from Divot Holes

Q. May a Committee make a Local Rule providing relief without penalty from divot holes or repaired divot holes (e.g., holes that have been filled with sand and/or seed mix)?

A. No. Such a Local Rule would modify Rule 13-1 and is not authorized. (New)

33-8/44.5 Status of Growing Things Rooted Within Environmentally-Sensitive Area

Q. A player's ball comes to rest through the green but near an environmentally-sensitive area that has been defined as a lateral water hazard. The player's backswing is interfered with by a branch of a tree that is rooted within the environmentally-sensitive area but overhangs ground outside the hazard. With the Local Rule for Environmentally-Sensitive Areas in effect, is the player required to take relief from the branch without penalty?

A. No. The player must play the ball as it lies or deem it unplayable (Rule 28). The part of the tree that extends beyond the margin of the lateral water hazard is not part of the lateral water hazard and therefore not part of the environmentally-sensitive area. Consequently, the Local Rule does not apply to that part of the branch.

The same result would apply if the environmentally-sensitive area had been defined as out of bounds as the out of bounds line, like that of the lateral water hazard, extends vertically upwards and downwards.

If, however, the environmentally-sensitive area had been defined as ground under repair, the player would be required to take relief, without penalty, from the branch, as the entire tree is part of the ground under repair (see Definition of “Ground Under Repair”).

To avoid such situations, it is recommended that, where possible, the Committee define the margins of an environmentally-sensitive area so that any overhanging branches are within the area. (New)

34-1b/9 Breach of Anti-Doping Condition Discovered After Competition Closed

Q. In stroke play, a Committee discovers after a competition has closed that a player was in breach of that competition’s anti-doping condition, which carries a penalty of disqualification. If the player claims no prior knowledge of the breach, how should Rule 34-1b(iv) be interpreted?

A. Anti-doping conditions adopt a policy whereby a player is held to be responsible for a breach of the condition regardless of how this may have happened. Therefore, from a Rules of Golf perspective, a player who commits a breach of such an anti-doping condition is deemed to have known he was in breach of a Rule, for which the penalty is disqualification. Accordingly, Exception (iv) to Rule 34-1b applies and the player must be disqualified. (New)