

# Provisional— Say it before you Play it

BY JERRY GILDEA,

AGA RULES CHAIRMAN



## RULE 27-2A

*For want of a nail a shoe was lost,  
for want of a shoe a horse was lost,  
for want of a horse a rider was lost,  
for want of a rider a battle was lost.*

The golfing version of this famous saying, and management tool, goes “For want of a word strokes may be lost.” The

word involved is “Provisional.”

An incident that occurred during last year’s Northern Amateur at Antelope Hills Golf Course in Prescott shows how important the word provisional can be.

At a relatively short par 4 with out of bounds on the left, a player pulled his tee shot down that left side. Some small trees just off the teeing ground blocked the view enough so the player could not see whether or not his ball stayed in bounds. He walked over to his golf bag, took out another ball and as he was returning to the teeing ground, one of his fellow-competitors asked him if he was going to play another ball. He said “Yes,” and played the ball down the same line his first ball had taken.

A Rules Official arrived on the scene and helped look for the two balls. One ball was found in a good lie 20 yards from the putting green and the other could not be found. The player identified the found ball as his original and made preparations to complete the hole with it.

At this time, one of his fellow-competitors approached the Rules Official and told him the player had not said he was playing a provisional ball. The Official questioned the player and determined that this was indeed the case. The

player had never stated he was going to play a provisional ball—just that he was going to play another ball. Since the player had not specifically stated that he was going to play a provisional ball, the second ball he played from the tee was his ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance. As a result, he had to abandon his original ball. Since his other ball could not be found, it was a lost ball and the player had to play again from the tee.

The competitor was informed that he would be playing his fifth stroke. He once again pulled his tee shot down the left side. No one had been able to see the ball down, so the player loudly informed everyone he was playing a provisional ball and this time struck it safely to the right side about 30 yards from the green in plain sight, and inbounds. His original ball in this sequence was found about three inches out of bounds. When asked, the Official informed the player that he would be playing his eighth stroke from the fairway.

So the player went from lying 1 about 20 yards from the green to lying 7 about 30 yards from the green all because he had not informed his fellow competitors he was going to play a “provisional” ball.

Rule 27-2a specifically provides that the player must inform his opponent, marker or fellow-competitor that he intends to play a provisional ball. The following are examples of statements that do not satisfy these requirements.

- (a) “That might be lost, I am going to reload.”
- (b) “That might be out of here.”
- (c) “I’d better hit another one.”
- (d) I will never find that one. I’ll play another.” (Dec. 27-2a/1)

In this instance, the want of the word “provisional” cost the player six strokes. The more common cost is stroke and distance, but even that is a high price to pay for omitting the word “provisional.”

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE DAMONDO