



PGA

Northern Texas Section

Rules of Golf Principal Changes for 2012

The Rules of Golf enters the beginning of a new four-year cycle this year. The USGA and R&A have worked to make a significant number of enhancements to the Rules of Golf that are effective worldwide as of January 1, 2012.

The following are pertinent changes to the Rules of Golf we suggest you familiarize yourself with.

Definitions

Addressing the Ball

The Definition is amended so that a player has addressed the ball simply by grounding his club immediately in front of or behind the ball, regardless of whether or not he has taken his stance. Therefore, the Rules generally no longer provide for a player addressing the ball in a hazard. (See also related change to Rule 18-2b)

Rules

Rule 1-2. Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions

The Rule is amended to establish more clearly that, if a player intentionally takes an action to influence the movement of a ball or to alter physical conditions affecting the playing of a hole in a way that is not permitted by the Rules, Rule 1-2 applies only when the action is not already covered in another Rule. For example, a player improving the lie of his ball is in breach of Rule 13-2 and therefore that Rule would apply, whereas a player intentionally improving the lie of a fellow-competitor's ball is not a situation covered by Rule 13-2 and, therefore, is governed by Rule 1-2.

Rule 4-3. Damaged Clubs; Repair and Replacement

This Rules has been modified to clarify that a player may not replace a club which has become unfit for play during the normal course of play (see Rule for definitions) by assembling component clubheads, shafts or other equipment carried by or for the player during the stipulated round.

Rule 6-3a. Time of Starting

Rule 6-3a is amended to provide that the penalty for starting late, but within five minutes of the starting time, is reduced from disqualification to loss of the first hole in match play or two strokes at the first hole in stroke play. Previously this penalty reduction was a condition of competition for sanctioned Northern Texas PGA events, so there is no practical change.

Rule 12-1. Seeing Ball; Searching for Ball

Rule 12-1 is reformatted for clarity. In addition, it is amended to (i) permit a player to search for his ball anywhere on the course when it may be covered by sand and to clarify that there is no penalty if the ball is moved in these circumstances, and (ii) apply a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2a if a player moves his ball in a hazard when searching for it when it is believed to be covered by loose impediments.

Rule 13-4. Ball in Hazard; Prohibited Actions

Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 is amended to permit a player to smooth sand or soil in a hazard at any time, including before playing from that hazard, provided it is for the sole purpose of caring for the course and Rule 13-2 (Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play) is not breached.

Rule 18-2b. Ball Moving After Address

A new Exception is added that exonerates the player from penalty if his ball moves after it has been addressed when it is known or virtually certain that he did not cause the ball to move. For example, if it is a gust of wind that moves the ball after it has been addressed, there is no penalty and the ball is played from its new position.

Rule 19-1. Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped; By Outside Agency

The note is expanded to prescribe the various outcomes when a ball in motion has been deliberately deflected or stopped by an outside agency.

Rule 20-7c. Playing from Wrong Place; Stroke Play

Note 3 is amended so that if a player is to be penalized for playing from a wrong place, in most cases the penalty will be limited to two strokes, even if another Rule has been breached prior to his making the stroke.

Decisions

Decision 13-2/0.5 Meaning of Improve

In the context of Rule 13-2 (Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or line of Play), this new Decision states that “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. Decision 13-2/0.5 gives a number of examples of what would and would not be a breach of this Rule.

Appendix

Appendix IV

A new Appendix is added to prescribe general regulations for the design of devices and other equipment, such as tees, gloves and distance measuring devices.

Many other smaller changes were made to the Rules and Decisions for 2012. Please contact the USGA or Northern Texas PGA for further information.