

A Conversation about the Rules of Golf 2016-2017

For those who have studied the Rules of Golf for some period, there are many aspects of the Rules that have become quite familiar to them through experience and the classroom. For those who are just embarking on this journey, they will encounter many unfamiliar facets of individual Rules, unknown relationships between different Rules, and above all the many critical nuances across all the Rules to be learned. The following informal dialogue is based on a possible conversation with a fictional beginner and is presented in a question and answer format. In looking at the questions of the inexperienced, the person who reads this will recognize thoughts that perhaps they either have forgotten or questions that they once asked or were not asked as they were not as inquisitive or astute at the time. This may be a refreshing discourse for all those who want to learn more about the Rules and may remind some of important issues once forgotten or perhaps represent views and questions unthought-of in the past. As expected, the questions do not necessarily follow the Rules, might have embedded mistakes in them, and are sometimes imperfect in the statement of the problem but the answers are correctly based on the USGA Rules of Golf and Decisions on the Rules of Golf for 2016-17.

Note: In what follows, whenever a Rule number is written, the title of the Rule is omitted, as remembering to associate a Rule number with its title is one of the first tasks of learning about the Rules. However, in the first mention of a particular Decision, the title of the Decision is given to put into context what is being discussed about that particular Decision.

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Definitions

Q. In the Definition of Ball in Play, the third paragraph has two sentences and I was wondering about an example of the second sentence – “Otherwise, the *ball in play* includes a ball played from outside the *teeing ground* when the player elects or is required to play his next *stroke* from the *teeing ground*.” Are these two correct examples in stroke play?

1. After playing from within the teeing ground, a player deems his tee shot unplayable and goes back to the tee. He makes his next stroke under Rule 28a slightly forward of the tee markers into the fairway. That ball is in play, but he has played from a wrong place. He would incur a one-stroke penalty under Rule 28a and an additional two penalty strokes for playing from the wrong place. He would be playing his sixth shot from the fairway.
2. A player’s tee shot goes out of bounds. He makes his next stroke under Rule 27-1b slightly forward of the tee markers into the fairway. That ball is in play, but he has played from a wrong place. He would incur a one-stroke penalty under Rule 27-1b and an additional two penalty strokes for playing from the wrong place. He would be playing his sixth shot from the fairway.

A. You are correct.

Q. The Definition of Equipment excludes "any ball" that the player has played at the hole being played. Does that mean that a provisional ball or a second ball played under any Rule is not equipment? And does that explain why, if a player's second ball was deflected by the player's original ball, there is no penalty, unless both balls are on the putting green prior to the stroke?

A. The answer to your questions are both yes. Here is the list from Decision 18/7 [Explanation of "Any Ball He Has Played"]:

1. the ball in play
2. a provisional ball
3. a second ball played under Rule 3-3
4. a second ball played under or Rule 20-7c
5. a ball being used for practice

However, there is a sixth ball played at the hole being played that should be on that list in the Decision – a ball that is holed [trivial but true].

This is a very important Decision to remember and most difficult to find when paging through the book. Therefore, always go to the Index first. It is listed under Equipment.

Also remember that the Note to the definition says, “A ball being played at the hole being played is *equipment* when it has been lifted and not put back into play.”

For the case of balls on the putting green relating to this definition, see Decision 3-3/7 [Original Ball Strikes Second Ball or Vice Versa], Decision 18-5/2 [Original Ball Struck by Provisional Ball] and Decision 19-5/5 [Provisional Ball Struck by Original Ball].

Q. As you have just mentioned, Decision 18/7 spells out that this includes the ball in play, a provisional ball, a second ball played under Rule 3-3 or Rule 20-7c and a ball being used for practice. The exclusion makes sense to me for the ball in play, a provisional ball, and the two cases of a second ball.

The one that I have trouble with is the practice ball. Suppose I am practicing around the tee and my practice ball accidentally moves my opponent's ball in play, as he had the honor and flubbed the tee shot just in front of the teeing ground. Under this Decision, my equipment did not move his ball in play, right? Rather, the practice ball is an outside agency, right? So there is no penalty to me and his ball just gets replaced? It seems like I should get a penalty.

Why is a ball being used for practice included in the exception?

A. You are not correct about the practice ball being an outside agency but we will get that in a moment. First, let's examine some background.

The exclusion of the player's ball in play from the Definition of Equipment makes a lot of sense as we would not want to have penalty/recall situations resulting from something involving this ball if it were to be equipment. In the latter case, suppose a player's ball in play after a stroke struck an opponent's ball in play at rest. How would you rule? Would there be penalties and to whom? Perhaps there should be a recall of the stroke. All choices are undesirable.

There are a number of other unwanted results if the ball in play were equipment - what about the player's own ball in play striking his provisional ball – a penalty to the player in all situations? Once the player's ball in play is excluded as an item of equipment we realize that there are several other categories of a ball that probably should be included in the exclusion. We could debate the worthiness of each of these five but they all made the cut, including a ball being used for practice.

Now, to the questions – “Rather, the practice ball is an outside agency, right? So there is no penalty to me and his ball just gets replaced?”

According to the Definition of Equipment and the examples in Decision 18/7, the practice ball is not equipment; furthermore, within the Definition of Outside Agency, we see that any ball played by either side at the hole being played is not an outside agency and that would include a ball being used for practice.

With respect to your supposition about a player practicing and causing his opponent’s ball in play to move through the action of the ball with which he is practicing, you appear to be assuming that a player is only subject to penalty if his equipment were to cause an opponent’s ball to move under Rule 18-3b. Although it is true that the practice ball is not the player’s equipment, we would conclude that since the player’s actions caused the opponent’s ball in play to move the player would incur a one-stroke penalty and the ball must be replaced, Rule 18-3b.

This would be analogous in part to the situation in Decision 18-2/ 20.5 [Player’s Practice Swing Moves Loose Impediment Which Moves Ball]. There, a player’s practice swing caused a loose impediment, an outside agency, to displace his own ball and he was subject to penalty under Rule 18-2. The key points in that Decision applicable to your question are that [1] the player is deemed to have caused his ball in play to move in breach of Rule 18-2, [2] it is reasonably foreseeable that a practice swing will move a loose impediment that may in turn cause a ball in play to move, and [3] a player can, through reasonable care, avoid taking practice swings that might produce such a result.

Q. I just saw another subtlety in the Rules that I probably should have seen before:

While “line of play” and “line of putt” are both defined as the line between the ball as it lies and the path of intended flight from the stroke to the hole, and reasonable distance to each side, Rule 8, Rule 13, and Rule 16 place restrictions on what can happen on the extension of the line of play past the hole, but not for the line of putt past the hole, if I am reading them correctly.

Why is that?

A. You don’t have this quite right.

The line of play is a direction whereas the line of putt is a line on the ground. There are differences between these two terms, which are defined terms in the Definitions section of the Rules booklet.

The line of play exists for a ball lying anywhere without restriction, including when a ball lies on the putting green. The line of putt exists only when the ball lies on the putting green. In neither definition does the line extend beyond the hole. Therefore, Rule 13-2 mentions "extension beyond the hole" in connection with the prohibition of an activity improving the line of play. This is so that some activity beyond the hole may be governed by the Rule - just restricting the activity on the line of play or line of putt would be insufficient in those cases.

Very seldom do we see the Rules governing the line of play applied to the putting green because Rule 16-1, which applies specifically to the putting green including the line of putt, is usually sufficient to regulate activity there. The best example of the need for and the use of Rule 13-2 on the putting green is Decision 16-1a/4 [Removing Casual Water from Hole].

Another important difference between line of play and line of putt is that the latter does not extend vertically upwards - it is truly a line on the ground for which the Rules call for major restrictions on permitted activity according to Rule 16-1.

Q. That is very helpful. Let me ask follow-up questions:

1. Rule 13-2 does not prohibit touching the line of play, whereas Rule 16-1 prohibits touching the line of putt, except for the seven exceptions. Since I believe that only the line of play, and not the line of putt, extends beyond the hole, does this mean that there is no violation of Rule 13-2 if a player touches the green on the extension of the line of play past the hole?
2. Also, if Rule 13-2 applies on the putting green, then why does Decision 17-1/4 [Flagstick Attendant Stands Behind Hole] come out the way it does, or at least why is it not worded in a more qualified way? What I mean is if it is not appropriate to stand on an extension of the line of play during a stroke, why does it become permissible just to avoid another player's line of putt? And since there are three sides [left, back of, and right], on which to stand, why shouldn't the attendant have to avoid both the player's line of play, or extension thereof, and the other player's line of putt?

A. Here are the answers:

1. You still don't quite have this right.
Re-read the Definition of Line of Play. Hint – neither the line of play nor the line of putt extend beyond the hole. Rule 13-2 governs activities on a reasonable extension of the line of play beyond the hole and Rule 16-1 governs activities on

the putting green as a whole, which includes qualified restrictions about touching the line of putt and about repairing damage to the putting green anywhere.

2. You don't quite have this quite right either.

Rule 17-1, in the case of indicating the position of the hole as opposed to indicating the line of play, overrides the other Rules with respect to where one might stand or is permitted to stand for the purpose of indicating the position of the hole. As a practical matter, the Decisions are seldom complete and must be taken into consideration with the Rules and other Decisions that sometimes say something quite tangential, if not outright contradictory. This is just a fact of life we have to deal with - determining which Rule or Decision overrides the other.

Q. On my previous question, I was being inarticulate. I know that neither the line of play nor the line of putt extend beyond the hole. That's the easy part to me. What I am trying to make sure that I understand is the distinction in Rule 13-2, where the prohibition on improving the line of play applies to a reasonable extension beyond the hole and the prohibition in Rule 16-1a about touching the line of putt, which includes no similar "beyond the hole" provision. Likewise, Rule 8-2a states, regarding indicating the line of play, that no one may be positioned by the player for that purpose on or close to the line of play or an extension of the line beyond the hole while the stroke is being made. Rule 8-2b only prohibits touching the line of putt without any comparable "beyond the hole" provision.

I am just trying to make sure that I understand the interaction of these three Rules, and I am reading them to allow touching the green beyond the hole so long as there is no evidence of an actual creation or elimination of a surface irregularity on the green other than removing loose impediments -- including sand and loose soil on the green -- and repairing ball marks. But I take it that, even though the line of putt does not extend beyond the hole, Rule 13-2 would still make it improper to repair spike marks on an extension of the line of play beyond the hole on the green?

Does this clarify what I am trying to understand? Sorry about the imprecision in my earlier question.

A. OK, you are making progress but you still don't have this quite right yet; however, these are good questions.

Yes - Rule 13-2 [prohibition on activities that improve] as well as Rule 16-1c [prohibitions on activities that assist] make it improper to repair spike marks on an extension of the line of play beyond the hole on the green. Rule 13-2 does not

specifically prohibit touching the putting green unless the touching is part of an otherwise prohibited action.

As you have noted, Rule 13-2 says that the "line of play or a reasonable extension of that line beyond the hole" must not be improved. This provision applies everywhere on the golf course including when a player's ball lies on the putting green, thus it applies to the putting green as well as through the green or in a hazard.

It is also correct that Rule 16-1a restricts touching the line of putt but does not restrict touching the putting green in the area beyond the hole. However, the area beyond the hole is subject to other restrictions based on what Rule 13-2 tells us [which may involve touching], such as improving the line of play or a reasonable extension thereof by repairing damage to the putting green beyond the hole. This is where redundancy in the Rules comes into play, as for example with the second paragraph of Rule 16-1c, which also governs and restricts certain activity on the putting green including beyond the hole, such as repair of damage, other than hole plugs or ball marks, to the putting green if the repair might assist the player in his subsequent play of the hole.

As to Rule 8, note that Rule 8-2a governs activity when the player's ball lies "other than on the putting green," whereas Rule 8-2b governs activity when the player's ball lies "on the putting green," such as pointing out the line of putt, which is not permitted during the stroke. This latter restriction from Rule 8-2b is why it is not necessary for Rule 8-2b to address the issue of positioning someone beyond the hole to indicate the line of putt similar to that of Rule 8-2a.

The interaction of these four Rules might be thought of by some as perhaps bizarre but the Rules do achieve the desired results.

As to your penultimate question, even in the absence of the last paragraph of Rule 16-1c, you are correct in that Rule 13-2 would not permit repair of spike marks immediately beyond the hole as such action would be considered an improvement of a reasonable extension of the line of play beyond the hole.

Q. The Definition of Out of Bounds says that we look to the nearest inside points of the stakes or fence posts "excluding angled supports." The definition says that objects defining out of bounds are not obstructions. Does this mean that the part of an angled support that is on the golf course side of the margin of the out of bounds may properly be treated as an obstruction from which relief may be taken under Rule 24?

A. Yes, see Decision 24/2 [Angled Supports or Guy Wires Supporting Boundary Fence]. Any part of such an angled support or guy wire that is in bounds is an

obstruction. There is actually more to this situation that you see at first glance. The assumption underlying the situation is that the supports are attached to the fence and thus fixed. That means that only the part that is in bounds is an obstruction since any part of an immovable object that is out of bounds is not an obstruction. Also take a look at Decision 24/1 [Steps Attached to a Boundary Fence]. This Decision tells us that this set of steps is an obstruction without qualifying whether the set is in bounds or not. This would imply that the steps might be movable or, if fixed, that they are entirely in bounds.

Q. I think that I still do not fully understand exactly what constitutes an "outside agency." I have read the definition several times. But there are some ambiguities for me:

1. First of all, the definition is circular: It says an outside agency is "any agency," but it does not define the term "agency." So what is an agency for purposes of the Rules of Golf?
2. Second, it says that outside agency covers "any agency" and gives exceptions. What about "partners" in foursomes or four-ball match play? I presume that neither the caddies nor the equipment of the players nor their partners are outside agencies, but am I correct and, if so, how do we know that?
3. Finally, the issue that got me into this study and set of questions is how do we know when a golf ball is an outside agency and, in particular, for application of Rule 19-1? Do I need to distinguish in this regard between:
 - a. The player's ball that has been lifted?
 - b. The opponent's ball in motion? The opponent's ball when lifted?
 - c. A fellow-competitor's ball in motion? A fellow-competitor's ball when lifted?
 - d. A player in the group that is following?
 - e. A ball from a group on another hole?

I am struggling a little with Rule 19 and when a ball is an outside agency, and it has led me to question my entire understanding of the concept of outside agency. You have previously pointed out to me that the term outside agency encompasses many things that we see on the course, such as loose impediments. But I think that I still do not understand it well enough. Can you offer some guidance?

A. These are all very good questions. To begin with, let's look at the two relevant definitions.

Here is the Definition of Outside Agency as found in the Rules of Golf:

In match play, an “*outside agency*” is any agency other than either the player’s or *opponent’s side*, any *caddie* of either *side*, any ball played by either *side* at the hole being played or any *equipment* of either *side*.

In stroke play, an *outside agency* is any agency other than the *competitor’s side*, any *caddie* of the *side*, any ball played by the *side* at the hole being played or any *equipment* of the *side*.

An *outside agency* includes a *referee*, a *marker*, an *observer* and a *forecaddie*. Neither wind nor water is an *outside agency*.

Here is the Definition of Side [in part] as found in the Rules of Golf:

A “*side*” is a player, or two or more players who are *partners*.

Now to your question, here are the answers:

1. Yes, you are correct in that this definition is somewhat circular. The commonly accepted meaning of the term agency is that it is a definite entity, animate or inanimate, such as a tree, a rock, a ball washer, a golf cart, a golf ball, a squirrel, an individual and so forth.
2. The answer to this question comes directly from the two definitions above. In match play, neither the player nor his opponent is an outside agency to the other. In match play, neither their partners, nor their caddies, nor any ball they have played at the hole being played nor the equipment of the players are outside agencies with respect to the player or his opponent. In stroke play, neither the competitor’s partner, nor their caddies, nor any ball they have played at the hole being played nor the equipment of the players are outside agencies with respect to the competitor. Because of the Definition of Side, we see that caddies are not part of the side, only the players are; however, caddies are part of the exception clause in the Definition of Outside Agency. The Definition of Side could be changed to include the caddies but that has other unwanted ramifications. Unfortunately, there are probably a large number of individuals that think caddies are part of the side.
3. Regarding the status of golf balls, we associate a ball with a particular side, much as we do equipment, and that determines its agency status based on the Definition of Outside Agency, not whether it is in play or lifted. Thus, whether a ball is lifted [not in play] or not lifted [in play], its agency status doesn’t change. Of course, its status as equipment is dependent on whether it is lifted [equipment] or not lifted [not equipment].

Q. Thanks. This is very helpful.

This clarifies to me that a player's ball in motion that is deflected by another ball in motion is considered to be deflected by an outside agency if the other ball is played from a group on another hole or from another group on the same hole. Would you agree?

This doesn't completely clarify for me whether if a ball which is lifted could be an outside agency or not. Suppose a ball is lifted, the player tosses it to his caddie to be cleaned, and it bounces off the caddie and hits another ball in motion [ball of fellow-competitor or opponent]. Let's also say that the other ball in motion was after a stroke on a putting green. Would the player whose ball in motion is deflected by the lifted ball cancel and replay, or play as it lies?

A. Agree with your first question because of the Definition of Outside Agency.

For the second question, remember that a lifted ball is equipment of a particular player until it is put back into play. Whether the owner of the ball in motion that was deflected by the equipment [lifted ball] must/may replay his stroke according to Rule 19-1/Rule 19-3 depends on the relationship of the two owners [partners, opponents or fellow-competitors] of the balls involved and the Definition of Outside Agency. See Decision 19-5/1.7 [Ball Dropped on Putting Green by Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Falls on Player's Moving Ball] for this exact situation. A ball is associated with its owner whether it is in play or lifted.

Q. A stipulated round is defined as 18 or fewer holes. Rule 2-3 expressly authorizes the Committee to extend a stipulated round in match play in the event of a tie. Rule 3 does not provide similar authority to a Committee to extend a stipulated round in stroke play. Moreover, while Rule 33 requires a Committee to establish conditions of competition, which presumably includes how a tie in stroke play at the end of all stipulated rounds will be resolved, I do not see anything there that gives a Committee authority to extend a stipulated round in stroke play.

1. Is this correct -- that a playoff of whatever kind in a stroke play event is a new stipulated round, not an extension of a prior stipulated round?
2. If so, does this mean that, after finishing the last stipulated round in stroke play and prior to any playoff, a competitor may change the clubs in his bag [Rule 4-4] or practice in compliance with Rule 7-1 and not be in violation of Rule 7-2?

A. You said - "I do not see anything there that gives a Committee authority to extend a stipulated round in stroke play." You're right in that Rule 33-6, Decision of Ties, is silent on how a tie in stroke play must be decided except that it may not be decided by a match.

In stroke play, the stipulated round is 18 holes or less. If a tie occurs at the end of 18 holes and the Committee wants to resolve it, a new stipulated round of any number equal to or less than 18 holes may be authorized, including a hole-by-hole playoff. This has implications for several Rules such as Rule 4-4 and Rule 7-1b.

In match play, if the match is all square, the players just keep on playing if the Committee orders the match extended with the extra holes being a part of the stipulated round. Otherwise, the match ends in a tie, which is not unusual, as for example in a Walker Cup competition.

These are very important points.

Q. I am rereading the Definitions. A lateral water hazard is defined as "that part of a water hazard that is so situated that it is not possible to drop a ball behind the water hazard in accordance with Rule 26-1b".

Does this mean that, even if a water hazard is not marked by red stakes or lines, a player may treat it as one in some circumstances?

A. See Decision 26/3 [Unmarked Water Hazard].

Rule 1

Q. Why are the players not subject to disqualification under Rule 1-3 on the facts supposed in Decision 13-2/36 [Competitor Sanctions Repair of Spike Damage on His Line of Putt by Fellow-Competitor]? By that I mean why are they not subject to Rule 1-3, since they purposely had the fellow-competitor improve the competitor's line of putt, as I read the Decision?

A. This is a very good question and this answer will illustrate the requirement for a violation of Rule 1-3 to occur - the players must be aware of the Rules and agree not to follow them. See Decision 1-3/2 [Agreement to Concede Short Putts] for a situation where Rule 1-3 would not apply if the players were ignorant of the Rules. See also Decision 1-1/1 [Two balls in Play Simultaneously at Different Holes], Decision 1-3/7

[Agreement That Side Losing After 18 Holes of 36-Hole Match Will Concede Match] and Decision 2-1/1.5 [Players Agree to Consider Hole Halved During Play of a Hole].

The situation in Decision 13-2/36 is a simple application of Rule 1-2 to the fellow-competitor [altering physical conditions with the intent of affecting the play of a hole] and Rule 13-2 to the competitor [allowed the line of play to be improved]. Additionally, Rule 1-3 would not apply since there was neither evidence that either of the players knew they were in violation of the Rules nor that they made an agreement to waive the Rules.

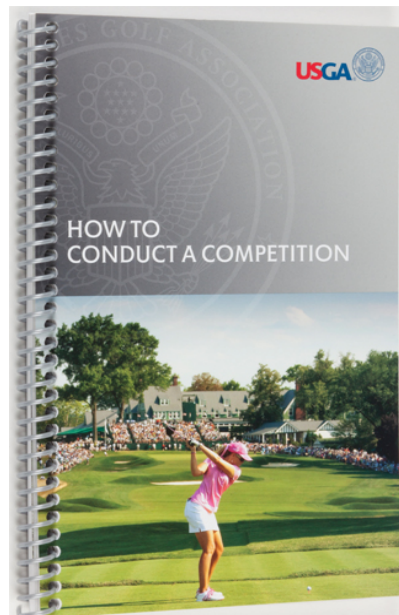
According to the wording of the Decision, it is entirely possible that both players were ignorant of both of the Rules. Of course, the latter fact would not get them off the hook for the violations of Rule 1-2 and 13-2, which don't require knowledge of what the Rules say.

Another interesting aspect of this Decision is that it illustrates the principles that Rule 1-2 is an intent-based Rule and that Rule 13-2 is a results-based Rule. To be in violation of Rule 1-3, the players must have the intent and knowledge to purposely take an action prohibited by the Rule. To be in violation of Rule 13-2, the player's action, intended or otherwise, must simply result in the outcome that the Rule prohibits.

Rule 2

Q. Any advice about how to referee in match play?

A. First, get the latest copy of the USGA booklet, How to Conduct a Competition.



This very useful publication is available from the online USGA Publications Store [\$8.95, revised in 2012]. There is an entire section therein relating to on-course administration and how to referee.

Then, note the Definition of Referee in the Definitions Section of the Rules of Golf booklet, especially the Exception in match play that limits a referee's authority when he is not assigned to accompany the players throughout a match. Besides knowing the Rules, two of the most important aspects of refereeing are order of play and how to make a ruling.

Let the players determine order of play unless they say something to the effect, "go ahead if you are ready," indicating that it doesn't matter whose turn it is to play. You must insure that they play in proper order but let them take the lead if at all possible. The idea is to be invisible except when needed by the players. On the teeing ground, it's easy to stand out of the way but it becomes difficult and crucial around the putting green where you have to be in position to see certain things - but almost never go onto the putting green. Never, never, never let them play out of turn - it means that you are not doing your job and it will lead to unpleasant situations arising between the players.

Having read the words above "never let them play out of turn," you should be sure to take a look at the sole exception to that statement, Decision 10-1c/3 [Player Invites Opponent to Play First to Save Time]. In match play, a player whose turn it is to play may invite his opponent to play first to save time, but if the opponent does so, the player has waived his right under Rule 10-1c to recall the stroke played out of turn. The opponent is under no obligation to accept the offer to play first. This situation is not

uncommon and you should be prepared for it by allowing this exception to the prohibition in the Rules to playing out of turn.

For rulings, you have the final say but always give a chance to the player to gain a second opinion. If the player is about to incur a loss of hole penalty, by all means, help him avoid it if this is possible. If the player incurs a loss of hole penalty, such as grounding his club in a hazard immediately prior to a stroke, tell him after the stroke, if the stroke is immediately forthcoming. In these situations, there is often a circumstance that you are not aware of that may make you reconsider your opinion. If you tell him of your ruling before the stroke and are wrong, you have most likely affected his game, which should be avoided.

Above all, prevent penalties before they occur if at all possible, which means use your judgment when to say something to a player. If something happens that surprises you, and it is almost certain that it will, always take plenty of time - there is never a need to rush. Never get distracted and always think about what might happen next, especially remembering on what part of the course the ball lies. Fortunately, the easier rulings are with Rule 18 and they are the most common.

Always permit the players to proceed without interference from you in all situations, if it appears they know what they are doing - if not, ask them if they wish to know what their options are. Almost all players know how to drop from a cart path or a water hazard and there is no need to tell them in advance unless they ask.

Finally, you must be certain about the Rules and if you are doubtful about any given situation, stop and get help. If you make a bad ruling, it may be possible to fix things up before the next stroke. Review the several Rule 34 Decisions about referee error and possible correction.

Q. What is the correct ruling in this situation?

In match play without a referee, A moved his ball marker over for interference and forgot to move it back before replacing his ball and playing it. Neither player noticed the violation at the time. On that basis, the hole was halved. At the next tee, B's caddie raised the issue with B before any tee shots were played. B unilaterally, without discussion with A and without A overhearing the conversation between B and his caddie, chose to disregard the penalty incurred by A and accepted the hole as halved. Is this proper?

A. Yes.

A player may disregard a breach of the Rules by his opponent provided there is no agreement by the sides to waive a Rule [see Rule 1-3]. See Note 1 to Rule 2-5.

Q. Considering what you have just said about overlooking and agreeing, is the following permissible? A witnesses B breach a Rule during play of the 4th hole but decides not to make a claim about the infraction. After teeing off the 5th hole, A advises B of the Rule that B breached, so that B will know not to do so again. Is such a discussion proper?

A. Yes. As it was too late for A to make a claim, there was no agreement to waive the Rules.

Q. I am confused by Decision 2-4/13 [Implied Concession of Hole Withdrawn] as no one holed out in this match without a referee. A could not find his ball and suggested that they move to next hole. He then found his ball, withdrew his suggestion and the players resumed play. B then played a wrong ball. As I understand it, the point of the Decision is that a concession of a hole cannot be withdrawn. I am just trying to make sure I know what a Committee would do if the players did not understand that and went ahead with the hole, with no claim being asserted prior to play from the next tee.

A. You are correct in that the point of the Decision is to emphasize that an implied concession is final.

In your question, it appears that the players did not know that a concession was final, continued play, holed out and then teed off on the next hole. In that situation, no claim could be made regarding the concession. And the hole would stand as played.

However, in a match without a referee, the players must protect their own rights and make a proper claim for the Committee to become involved. If a claim is not made, the Committee has no jurisdiction. When a claim is made, the Committee must act on that claim but is restricted to that incident and may not open the discussion to other issues unrelated to the claim such as an earlier or later infraction that a player overlooked or of which the players were in ignorance.

Unless a referee is assigned to accompany the players throughout a match, he has no authority to intervene in a match other than in relation to Rule 1-3, 6-7 or 33-7. See Definition of Referee, Exception in match play.

Q. We know that Rule 3-3 does not apply in match play. If a player plays a second ball in match play, it is a wrong ball, resulting in a loss of hole penalty, assuming a timely claim is made.

Now what happens in this supposition: A tees off and his ball comes to rest into a flowerbed. He is not sure whether it is ground under repair. He says to his opponent what his concern is, and that he is going to both play the original ball as it lies and play a second ball in accordance with Rule 25. His opponent is ignorant of the Rules and does not object. The player hits the original ball into a water hazard near the green but he hits his second ball onto the green. As the players walk up to the green, they see a Rules official and inquire whether the flower bed is ground under repair. The official says that it is. The player then abandons the original ball, holes out with the second ball, and, because his opponent took six strokes on the hole, claims the hole. They tee off on the next hole.

In the supposition, doesn't the second ball count, because the opponent was aware of everything and did not assert a timely claim?

How do I answer these types of questions on an exam?

A. The answer to the question about your supposition is yes.

In match play without a referee, the players must settle any doubt between themselves and sometimes it may not be consistent with the Rules. If there is any disagreement, then a timely claim may be made. In your supposition, there was no claim so the hole stands as played. In match play, if a player is doubtful of his rights or the correct procedure, he may not complete the play of the hole with two balls. See Note 2 to Rule 2-5.

There are numerous Decisions under Rule 2-5 that illustrate these points, including Decision 2-5/8.5, [Player and Opponent Agree on Incorrect Procedure; Whether Valid Claim May Be Made After Procedure Followed].

In an exam situation, you generally have to assume that an official or referee is present at the time of the incident unless the context implies otherwise. The exam question usually says, "What is the ruling?" That means what is the ruling if an official or referee is present and the correct answer must be based on the Rules of Golf. However, if the question states that a claim was not made and/or that there was no official or referee present, as in your question, then the result of the hole stands as played.

Rule 3

Q. In a quiz from somewhere, I read the following.

A competitor's ball comes to rest in an area marked as ground under repair from which play is prohibited under penalty of two strokes. Uncertain of the proper procedure to follow, he announces that he will play a second ball following the procedures of the ground under repair Rule and that he wishes to score with the original ball if the Rules permit. He plays the original ball as it lies inside the area of ground under repair. He then drops the second ball two club-lengths from the nearest point of relief as determined by the ground under repair Rule no nearer the hole and plays it from there. He properly reports to the Committee following his round.

The answer to the quiz question says that the score with the original ball counts with a two-stroke penalty. Why does the score with the original ball count when the Rules do not permit the procedure used by the competitor in play of the original ball?

You are correct in that the Rules do not permit the procedure used by the competitor in play of the original ball, since it was played from mandatory relief ground under repair. However, the Rules also do not permit the procedure used by the competitor when he dropped the second ball two club-lengths, instead of one club-length, from the nearest point of relief. In these situations, where the Rules do not permit the procedures used for both balls, the score with the original ball must count unless the competitor has committed a serious breach with that ball by playing from a wrong place, – see Rule 3-3b(iii). Here, there was no serious breach of the Rules in the play of either ball.

To properly interpret the above set of words, “the Rules do not permit the procedure,” you must refer to the Note at the end of the text in the Rule, defining the set of words, “the Rules permit the procedure.” The Note states the meaning of the latter set of words as, “after Rule 3-3 is invoked, either: (a) the original ball is played from where it had come to rest and play is permitted from that location, or (b) the *Rules* permit the procedure adopted for the ball and the ball is put into play in the proper manner and in the correct place as provided in the *Rules*.”

Rule 5

Q. If a player in match play makes a stroke at a wrong ball that strikes a paved cart path and shatters into pieces, I presume that Rule 15 applies with a loss of hole penalty? The player does not get to avoid the penalty just because of Rule 5-3 that

requires a cancelled stroke, does he? Rule 5-3 is unclear in this regard, as is Rule 15-3.

A. This is another question involving a situation that is unlikely to occur. However, the last paragraph of Rule 5-3 contemplates a stroke at a ball in play and doesn't apply to a stroke at a wrong ball. Thus, it is meaningless to contemplate whether it is recalled or not for shattering into pieces. In your case, the player simply incurs a penalty for making a stroke at a wrong ball, which is loss of hole in match play. If this incident were to occur in stroke play, the penalty is two strokes and the player must correct his error by playing the correct ball or proceeding under the Rules.

However, you raise an interesting question about the relationship between a cancelled or recalled stroke and any penalties incurred. For instance, if the player were to strike his ball twice and then the ball struck his opponent's equipment, the one-stroke penalty under Rule 14-4 is not cancelled regardless of whether the player elects to cancel and replay the stroke under Rule 19-3. Since the penalty for striking the ball twice during the stroke was incurred before the act that provided a reason for cancelling a stroke, that penalty must remain regardless of whether or not the stroke is recalled.

Q. I understand that Rule 5-3 on its face states that the player should announce his intention to his opponent or fellow competitor, mark the position of, lift and examine the ball without cleaning it. I have also read Decision 5-3/7 [Ball Thought to Be Unfit for Play; Committee Involvement When Opponent, Marker or Fellow-Competitor Not Readily Available] that states that a referee or a member of the Committee may fulfill the responsibilities of the opponent, marker or fellow-competitor in the relief procedure under Rule 5-3 and I understand it.

If I'm an official and a player in stroke play tells me that he wants to check to see if his ball is unfit for play, or wants to declare it unfit for play and seeks my agreement, do the Rules of Golf instruct me to decline to answer and to instead tell him that he must first consult with his fellow competitors or does the Decision override? What is really the way that the experienced officials do it?

A. As a practical matter, this Decision gives the official the authority to perform the function of the opponent, marker or fellow-competitor. This is also true if a player wishes to lift his ball for identification or to determine whether he is entitled to relief under a Rule.

Q. Rule 5-3 allows substitution only for a ball that becomes unfit for play during the play of the hole being played. Is the penalty - loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play - for substituting for an unfit ball that did not become unfit on that particular hole?

A. Yes provided a stroke is made at the substituted ball.

There are a number of situations covered by Rule 5-3. Consider the following three cases:

1. A ball is unfit for play according to the definition within Rule 5-3 and the player substitutes another ball, making a stroke at it - without following one or more parts of the specified procedure in Rule 5-3 required for substitution, such as announcing his intention to his opponent or fellow-competitor, until after he finishes the hole with the substituted ball. There is a one-stroke penalty for not following the required procedure.
2. A ball is unfit for play according to the definition within Rule 5-3 and the player substitutes another ball, making a stroke at it – without announcing his intention to his opponent in match play, fellow-competitor or marker in stroke play before lifting of the ball and the substitution, until after he finishes the hole with the substituted ball. He did not follow the required procedure because he had the authority to lift the ball and clean it, such as on a putting green under Rule 16-1, or lifting it from ground under repair to take relief. Although he had the authority to lift the ball and clean it without announcing his intention to do so, he must follow the remainder of the procedure prior to making a stroke at the substituted ball. There is a one-stroke penalty for not following the required procedure.
3. A ball is not unfit for play according to the definition within Rule 5-3 and the player substitutes another ball, making a stroke at it - - completely and accurately following the procedures in Rule 5-3; however it was incorrectly determined that the ball was unfit for play. There is no penalty because the player faithfully followed the procedure that allows him to substitute another ball as specified in the Rule, “if it is determined that the ball has become unfit for play...”

Thus, there are a number of possible combinations of the various parameters but the key is that the applicable parts of the required procedure must be followed in all cases in order to have the authority to make the substitution according to the Rules. If one or more applicable parts of the required procedure are not followed, the total penalty for this violation is only one stroke. If the player incurs the general penalty for a violation of the Rule, there is no additional penalty under the Rule.

Rule 6

Q. At a recent Rules seminar, there was a single page document available that listed, among other things, 18 one-stroke penalty situations [16 in both match and stroke play, one in match play only, and one in stroke play only]. I have now memorized those 18 situations where there is a one-stroke penalty, and it is making penalty calculations much easier for me.

The page says that there is a one-stroke penalty in stroke play only for slow play/undue delay, citing Rule 6-7. But Rule 6-7 appears to say that the penalty for slow play/undue delay is loss of hole in match play, and a two-stroke penalty in stroke play. So the Rule itself is not consistent with the document with the one-stroke penalty situations, is it?

Yes, I have read the provisions in Note 2 to Rule 6-7. This Note authorizes the Committee to use the conditions of competition to modify the penalties in stroke play, which is where I see a one-stroke penalty possibility. Am I correct in understanding the Rule and how the one-stroke penalty clause arises?

A. You are correct in that Rule 6-7 itself doesn't contain the one-stroke penalty provision. However, nearly all Committees follow Note 2 for stroke play; thus, Rule 6-7 is included in the document to which you made reference. It is important to understand the difference between the Rule and the Note, as you did.

Memorizing this list is absolutely one of the best foundations for learning and understanding the Rules. The list is available under Study Aids on the website – THROUGHTHEGREEN.ORG.

Rule 9

Q. Is it possible that, under Rule 2-2, A can get a half on this hole in Decision 9-2/9 [Player Reports Wrong Score for Hole; Error Discovered Several Holes Later]? A had holed out with either a half or a win with his erroneously reported score. That means A may have had no worse than a half or win with his actual score. So, depending on the facts, this could be a case where the second sentence of Rule 2-2 applies, isn't it?

A. This is different from a situation contemplated by Rule 2-2. In Decision 9-2/9, the players teed off on the next hole and it was under an assumption about the state of the

match that wasn't true because it was based on wrong information. According to Rule 9-2b(iii), this is a really bad thing and B, who received wrong information, is awarded the hole. Had wrong information been given by A after he had holed out for no worse than a half but before his opponent had holed out, then Rule 2-2 would apply to the hole in question.

See Decision 9-2/15 [Wrong Information After Play of Hole; When Penalty Applicable] for a situation where a player had actually won the hole but subsequently lost it due to giving wrong information after play of the hole.

You also should know that the second paragraph of Rule 2-2 doesn't apply to four-ball match play, one of the most common forms of play in the USA – see Decision 30-3/3 [Application of Rule 2-2 in Four-Ball Match Play].

Rule 10

Q. In the circumstances of the situation in Decision 10-1c/2 [Player Requested to Lift Ball Due to Interference Plays Out of Turn Instead], why does Rule 10-1c govern? Why doesn't the specific provision of Rule 22-2, with the general penalty of loss of hole, take precedence? It is match play, and player B exercised his rights under the Rules. Player A declined to comply with B's valid request under 22-2. Why doesn't 22-2 provide the governing penalty in that circumstance?

A. As you have probably figured out in your study so far, there are many situations where more than one Rule might conceivably apply. There is no clear and certain general guidance governing how to decide which Rule to apply to these types of cases.

In recent years, it appears as though the answers in various Decisions have been to the player's advantage if that seemed like the fair thing to do, that is, giving him a chance to correct his mistake. Generally, if the player has made a stroke, then there is no chance for correction and he will be subject to penalty. In the present situation, we give A the second chance to follow the Rules since he might not have understood the consequences of failure to comply with Rule 22 or perhaps he thought his rights were as in stroke play where he could have played instead of lifting. With that thought, we do not apply Rule 22 but instead apply Rule 10-1c, which would allow B to recall the stroke without penalty to A, if that is the preference of B.

If A refuses to replay the stroke after it has been recalled, then we would apply the general penalty [Rule 2-6] and A would lose the hole.

Q. Is it really true that the Rules "require" players to play in order of distance from the hole in stroke play? While the Rules state that is the order of play, there is no penalty for playing in a different order in stroke play, unless the players are doing so by agreement to obtain advantage. That hardly suggests a "requirement" to me; it seems much more like a "should" or a "suggestion" as with putting an identification mark on the golf ball. Indeed, we see PGA Tour pros every week play out of order to improve the pace of play or to "get out of the way."

A. You have the correct view of the totality of the situation, including how the game is played every day regarding order of play. However, a strict reading of Rule 10-2b makes it clear that, after the competitors have started play of a hole, "the ball farthest from the hole is played first." That is not an ambiguous statement. Of course, there is never a penalty for simply playing out of turn in any form of play.

Although in stroke play the Rules require the ball farthest from the hole to be played first, Decision 10-2c/2 [Competitors in Stroke Play Agree to Play Out of Turn But Not for Purpose of Giving One of Them an Advantage] states that Rule 10-2c specifically governs and permits the procedure of playing out of turn in stroke play.

In a stroke play situation, the Committee may be called upon to make a ruling if a player wishes to play out of turn. In Decision 10-2b/1 [Competitor Objects to Fellow-Competitor Putting Out of Turn], A's ball is four feet from the hole and B's ball is 30 feet away, thus by the Rules it is B's right to play first. Only if Rule 22 is involved would the Committee allow A to putt out of turn if a request is made for a ruling. However, the Decision goes on to say, "Although condoning putting out of turn in stroke play may be questionable in view of the explicit language of Rule 10-2b, there is no penalty for doing so [Rule 10-2c], it is not in conflict with the intent of Rule 10-2b, and it may tend to speed play. Accordingly, it is considered that the practice should not be discouraged."

Rule 11

Q. Is it correct that, in stroke play, if the player having teed up and made a stroke outside of the teeing ground, the player must make a stroke from inside the teeing ground before he has a ball in play? So, if in correcting his mistake, the player again tees up outside the teeing ground and makes another stroke, does he still not have a ball in play? And how many penalty strokes does he incur? Two for the first one for sure, but the Rule is a little vague on whether an additional two-stroke penalty goes with the second ball played from outside the teeing ground? I think not, but wanted to confirm.

A. You asked about a player who made several strokes from outside of the teeing ground in stroke play.

A ball played from outside the teeing ground in stroke play in starting play of a hole is not in play. Strokes made with that ball and any subsequent strokes made with any ball before successfully playing a ball from within the teeing ground do not count.

The penalty is two strokes regardless of the number of times a ball is played from outside the teeing ground before playing a ball from within the teeing ground.

Q. For stroke play, let's make sure that I have this correct, regarding repeated attempts to initiate play from the teeing ground. Am I correct that the two-stroke penalty for a ball played from outside of teeing ground, in stroke play, with required correction and the stroke itself not counting, applies until a ball is correctly put in play from teeing ground? So if the second attempt is from outside the tee as well, there are two more penalty strokes, and still no talent strokes?

A. You still don't quite have this right as of yet.

No "talent strokes" are counted until the first ball is successfully played from the teeing ground.

Prior to successfully playing this first stroke from within the teeing ground, there is only a single penalty of two strokes regardless of how many strokes are incorrectly made from outside the teeing ground when attempting to start play from the teeing ground.

Prior to successfully playing this first stroke from within the teeing ground, none of the strokes made with any ball have caused a ball to be put into play.

Additionally, no further strokes made at any ball count until the first ball is correctly played from the teeing ground except for the two-stroke penalty incurred for the first stroke made from outside the teeing ground. In ignorance, the player could make as many strokes as he likes from all the wrong teeing grounds he can find and continue to play the ball into the hole with as many more strokes as are required to do so but none count. He must first properly play a ball from the proper teeing ground before we start counting "talent strokes."

For all his trouble, he will still lie only three with the first ball after successfully playing from the teeing ground.

Rule 13

Q. I don't understand Decision 13/5 [Ball Lying on Obstruction in Bunker] that says a ball lying on an obstruction in a bunker is itself also considered to be in the bunker. A ball in a tree in a bunker is not in the bunker. A ball on an immovable obstruction is not touching the bunker, and the margin does not extend upwards. So what is the logic of this Decision?

A. This Decision, concerning either a movable obstruction or an immovable obstruction, is all about how the game is to be played. Although the margin of a bunker does not extend upwards, this Decision tells us that a ball lying on an obstruction in a bunker is in the bunker. If a ball came to rest on a drain that lay in a bunker, the Rules would want the player to make his next stroke from the bunker if he should take free relief from the obstruction. If the ball were to be considered not in the bunker, then his nearest point of relief would be outside the bunker.

Q. I can't understand the difference between the answers in Decision 13-2/29 [Worsening and Then Restoring Line of Play] and Decision 13-2/29.3 [Creating Footprints in Bunker on Line of Play When Required to Enter Bunker to Retrieve Ball].

In Decision 13-2/29, the player is not permitted to smooth sand in a bunker but in Decision 13-2/29.3, the player is entitled to restore the bunker to its former condition.

It has been confusing to understand it. But I think that the reason is that the player doesn't have any choice in that he is required to retrieve his ball in Decision 13-2/29.3. Is this correct?

A. Yes.

When a player drops a ball through the green and it rolls and comes to rest in a hazard, he is required to lift the ball and drop it again according to Rule 20-2c(i). This requirement can only be carried out by entering the hazard to retrieve the ball and most likely creating footprints. Therefore in fairness, he is entitled to restore the hazard.

As a general principle, if a player worsens the position of his ball, he is not entitled to restore the area as Decision 13-2/29 tells us as the smoothing would create a potential advantage by improving his line of play. However, notice that the last sentence of the answer points us to Decision 13-2/29.3 that will override the principle of Decision 13-2/29 for the special situation covered in Decision 13-2/29.3.

Whenever we study the Rules, we must always be cautious about the possibility of other Rules or Decisions creating an exception to what we might be reading. Some of these possibilities are very difficult to discern and only through experience and study will they become clear.

Q. In Decision 13-4/16 [Removal of Loose Impediment in Water Hazard Covering Wrong Ball], why is there not a penalty for moving the loose impediment partially covering a ball he has found in a hazard? Why doesn't Rule 13-4c apply?

A. The answer in this Decision comes directly from Rule 12-1b. In a hazard, if the player's ball is believed to be covered by loose impediments to the extent that he cannot find or identify it, he may, without penalty, touch or move loose impediments in order to find or identify the ball. This is a situation of Rule 12-1 overriding the prohibitions of Rule 13-4, an unknown relationship to be learned.

Q. If a pine needle is solidly embedded through the green but is not growing, is there a Rule 13-2 violation for hitting it with the club in the backward movement of the club prior to the stroke?

A. There would be no violation of Rule 13-2 if the lie of the ball or the area of intended swing is improved by the backward movement of the club for the stroke and the stroke is made. A good example of the application of Rule 13-2 in a situation like this is in Decision 13-2/9 [Lie Through the Green Improved When Sand Behind Ball Removed by Backswing]. Furthermore, if the pine needle were touched but there was no improvement to the lie of the ball or the area of intended swing, then a breach of Rule 13-2 has not occurred regardless of whether the stroke was made or discontinued.

If the pine needle is broken in the backward movement of the club and the stroke is not made, then there must be a determination made if there was a potential advantage gained by the player as a result of his actions.

In the context of Rule 13-2, "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 breach Rule 13-2 unless it creates such a potential advantage for the player in his play. See Decision 13-2/0.5 [Meaning of "Improve" in Rule 13-2].

Q. Decision 13-4/35.5 [Ball Played from Bunker onto Grass Bank; Player Hits Sand with Club; Ball Then Rolls Back into Bunker] makes complete sense to me, with one qualification. Shouldn't the Decision comment that if, however, there is any reasonable chance of the ball returning to the area in the bunker in which the player hit the sand with his club, there is a penalty under Rule 1-2 for taking an action to influence the movement of the ball as in Decision 1-2/8 [Player Presses Down Turf as Ball is Rolling Towards Area]? It is hard for me to see why this latter Decision would not be presumed to apply to the facts set forth in Decision 13-4/35.5?

A. At first glance, it would seem that Rule 1-2 is involved here in the situation that you describe but Exception 2 of Rule 13-4 overrides any other provisions in the Rules including Rule 1-2. The last sentence of the Exception for a ball that is outside of the bunker is absolute. Note that the Exception says "is" outside the bunker not "lies" outside the bunker thus the Exception applies not only to a ball at rest but also to one that is in motion.

Additionally, Rule 1-2, Exception 1 states that an action expressly permitted or expressly prohibited by another Rule is subject to that other Rule, not Rule 1-2.

This is another situation where one Rule overrides another Rule but fortunately, we have some advance guidance in the Exception to Rule 1-2, unlike some other situations.

Q. Suppose that in another situation similar to Decision 13-4/39 [Player Smooths Irregularities in Bunker After Playing Out of Turn in Match Play; Opponent Then Recalls Stroke], but one where before A smooths the sand, B tells him that he is recalling the stroke. Thus in this other situation, A is aware of the recalling of the stroke. The Decision implies that, for this other situation where he is aware that his stroke is recalled, if the ball is still in the bunker, A could not smooth the sand, because [1] A is aware that the stroke is being recalled and [2] the smoothing would in fact improve his lie for his next stroke from the bunker. Is that implication correct, since at the time the ball to be dropped neither lies in the bunker nor has been lifted from the bunker -- so, even if it would otherwise improve his lie in the bunker for his next stroke, why can't the player smooth in such circumstances?

A. There are two parts to Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 and the player's ball will qualify for either one or the other of the two parts:

- If the player's original ball is outside the bunker, then he may rake the bunker without restriction regarding any other Rules, especially Rule 13-2.

- If the player's original ball lies in the bunker, he is restricted by the provisions of Rule 13-2 as it applies to his next stroke, which would be from the bunker at the spot of his dropping. In other words, he must identify the spot where he would make his next stroke and not violate Rule 13-2 with respect to that spot by any smoothing of the sand.

The Decision implies exactly what you have stated in your second sentence. In your question about the supposition that the player is aware that the stroke has been recalled before dropping a ball, you say: "since at the time the ball to be dropped neither lies in the bunker nor has been lifted from the bunker." That is not correct as the premise of the second paragraph of the answer in the Decision is that as a result of the initial stroke, the player's ball still lies in the bunker.

According to the second part of the Exception, in the case of the ball that lies in the bunker at the time of the recalled stroke, the player may not rake the area from which he played the last shot as he is required to drop a ball at that spot [Rule 20-5] and smoothing that spot would be a violation of Rule 13-2.

Rule 14

Q. Decision 14-1a/3 [Putting with Wrong End of Putter] strikes me as a little odd. The player has not made a stroke at the ball, as the term "stroke" is defined in the Rules. Rather, he has improperly moved the ball at rest. Is it because Rule 14 overrides Rule 18, in terms of it being a two-stroke penalty in stroke play rather than a one-stroke penalty? But why don't we require the player to replace the ball, and make a proper stroke, rather than letting him treat the non-stroke as if it were a stroke and thus allowing the ball to be holed?

Is this not analogous to when a player in disgust purposely hits his ball in motion with his club as his putted ball is returning to him on a severely sloping green?

In that latter circumstance in stroke play, we assess a two-stroke penalty but have the player play the ball as it lies, right? I say it is analogous because in the latter case we do not treat the player as having taken another stroke, do we? If the ball went into the hole, he gets the two-stroke penalty, but is not required to play another stroke and can treat the ball as holed?

A. You have a number of issues incorrect here so let's take this apart one by one.

You said in the case of the player who holed his ball with the handle end of his putter – “The player has not taken a stroke at the ball, as the term “stroke” is defined in the Rules . . .” This is incorrect. According to the Definition of Stroke, the player in Decision 14-1a/3 has indeed made a stroke - “forward movement of the club made with the intent of striking at and moving the ball . . .” - albeit with the wrong end of the club. The key elements of the Definition are met with the player’s [1] use of a club to make the stroke and [2] intent to strike the ball.

However, his problem with using the wrong end of the club is that he did not strike the ball “with the head of the club” as Rule 14-1 requires - “must be fairly struck at with the head of the club . . .” – and he is in violation of that Rule.

The final important aspect of the Decision is that since he made a stroke, the ball is holed with the appropriate penalty from Rule 14-1.

In the second paragraph of your question where the player swipes in disgust at his ball in motion, striking the ball with his club, he had no intention of making a stroke, although he intended to deflect the ball. The swipe at the moving ball in disgust was a violation of Rule 1-2. He would suffer a two-stroke penalty under Rule 1-2 and would normally play the ball as it lies [Note 2 to Rule 1-2]. See Decision 1-2/5.5 [Player Purposely Stops or Deflects Ball; Where Next Stroke Must Be Played from] for situation similar to yours.

However, according to Note 1 to Rule 1-2, there must be a determination made if the player has committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, in which case the Committee may impose the penalty of disqualification.

Rule 15

Q. Is there a general principle under the Rules about when a ball may be permissibly substituted? Or do I just need to make a Rule by Rule list and memorize it?

A. There is no easily written principle and this is one of the most difficult aspects of the Rules for those just starting out. However, logic will usually get the correct answer if you start with the idea that the Rules say finish the hole with the ball you played from the teeing ground, unless the original ball is lost, out of bounds, in a water hazard, unplayable, unfit for play or not immediately recoverable.

Q. I have a question about Decision 15/8 [Ball Played Under Rule for Ball Lost in Ground Under Repair After Another Ball Played Under Stroke-and-Distance Procedure]. Why is there is no mention of the player playing from the wrong place?

A. Decision 15/8 is a simple case of lifting the ball in play and failing to replace it, complicated by the fact that, after lifting the ball, he substituted another ball to play out the hole.

He lifted his original ball without authority under the mistaken impression that he could play using the ground under repair Rule despite the fact that he had already played under the lost ball Rule. He played another ball from somewhere else [never puts the original ball back] so he incurs the general penalty for a violation of Rule 18-2 for not replacing the ball as required by that Rule. The player has indeed played from a wrong place even though the Decision doesn't mention this.

Decisions 18-2/8 [Ball Played from Ground Under Repair Picked Up and Relief Taken Under Ground Under Repair Rule] and 18-2/8.5 [Ball Played from Ground Under Repair Abandoned and Relief Taken Under Ground Under Repair Rule] are similar situations that also do not use the term playing from a wrong place when there is a general penalty violation of Rule 18-2 involving a failure to replace the ball.

Q. I am trying to work through all of the Rule 15 Decisions today, to reinforce what I have learned about this very difficult Rule.

Decision 15-1/2.5 [Balls Inadvertently Exchanged by Players After One Ball Struck and Moved the Other; One Player Substitutes Balls] makes complete sense to me in stroke play, except for one small issue: A receives a wrong ball penalty because he holed out with B's ball. Suppose that before holing out, A had marked the position of and lifted B's ball, replaced it, and holed out with it. Is it correct that there would be no wrong ball penalty, because A would now have put another ball in play, albeit through an unpermitted substitution? So his penalty would have been like B's penalty – in stroke play, a two-stroke penalty under Rule 15-2?

A. Correct.

In general, any ball, which would be a wrong ball if played as it lies, may be transformed into a substituted ball by the act of lifting it and putting it into play on the course [either at the original spot or otherwise], regardless of whether he knows anything about the legal ownership of the ball or not [the latter state of ignorance having nothing to do with anything]. However, you should carefully note Decision 15/11 [Wrong Ball Hit Out of Bounds; Another Ball Played Under Rule 27-1; Original Ball Then Found Nearby]. In

the situation in that Decision, the player plays a wrong ball and then substitutes a ball for the wrong ball under one of the relief Rules [Rule 27-1]. The ball played under Rule 27-1 is considered a continuation of the play of the wrong ball and is never in play; that is, the ball played under Rule 27-1 was not substituted for the original ball.

Q. Now that I understand that a wrong ball has little to do with whether the ball is the "right" ball or not, I am getting all of the Decisions in Rule 15 and 27 correct. It is like a light went on once I figured out to ignore the ordinary meaning of the term.

A. It's all pretty simple when you realize that a golf Rules term is not necessarily the same as the ordinary meaning of the term.

As to wrong ball, when you understand the fairly complex Decision 15-1/2.5 [Balls Inadvertently Exchanged by Players After One Ball Struck and Moved the Other; One Player Substitutes Balls] as the key to the difference between wrong ball and substituted ball, the veil is lifted.

The Definition of Wrong Ball is simple and clear in that a wrong ball is any ball other than the player's (i) ball in play, (ii) provisional ball, or (iii) second ball played under Rule 3-3 or Rule 20-7c in stroke play. However, simply reading the Definition to that point of listing and stopping there might be a problem as the last sentence is essential and cautions that a player's ball in play includes a ball substituted for the ball in play. Thus if a player takes another player's ball or an abandoned ball and puts either of them into play by dropping or placing, the player would not be making a stroke at a wrong ball if he made a stroke at either of the latter two balls as they became his ball in play according to the last sentence of the Definition.

Q. In stroke play, a player's tee shot lands on the putting green of a par-3 hole. He marks the position of and lifts his ball. When it is his turn to play, he places another ball, not his original ball, on the green at the proper spot and removes his ball-marker. As he is contemplating his next stroke, the wind blows his ball closer to the hole. He lifts the ball without marking its position, with the intention of replacing it at the spot from which the wind moved it. However, when it is lifted he realizes that he substituted a ball for his original ball played from the tee. He removes the original ball from his pocket and places it as nearly as possible at the spot where his tee shot had come to rest before the wind moved the ball. He sinks the putt.

What is his score for the hole?

A. The player scores two.

He was entitled to lift the original ball played from the tee after marking its position under Rule 16-1b but this Rule doesn't permit substitution. Because he did not make a stroke at the substituted ball, which had been put into play at the spot where his tee shot had come to rest, he is entitled to correct his error of wrongful substitution under Rule 20-6 by placing the original ball on the spot where it had come to rest, without penalty. Within the context of the Rules, playing the ball means making a stroke at the ball.

This situation is similar to that in Decision 15-2/2 [Player Mistakenly Substitutes Another Ball on Putting Green; Error Discovered Before Stroke Played]. The fact that the wind moved the ball before he had the opportunity correct his error is irrelevant. The key is that he hadn't made a stroke at the substituted ball.

Had he made a stroke at the substituted ball, he would have incurred a penalty for the wrongful substitution and would be required to hole out with the substituted ball.

Q. Here are my questions about where a fellow-competitor's caddie substitutes a ball for the competitor's ball when he lifts it without the authority of the competitor as in Decision 20-1/5 [Competitor's Ball Lifted Without Authority by Fellow-Competitor's Caddie Who Subsequently Substitutes Another Ball Which Competitor Plays]. Why is the player not responsible for playing a wrong ball?

1. The player has plenty of opportunity to identify his ball on the putting green. Why does the Committee relieve him of responsibility here for making sure that the ball he is going to make a stroke at is his ball, when it does not do so everywhere else on the course?
2. Assuming that the Committee agreed with my supposition that the player should be responsible here, please help me think through the analysis: Would this be an instance of the player playing a wrong ball? The ball was lifted by an outside agency without authorization by the player; this lifting took the ball out of play. Since the ball then placed on the green by the fellow competitor's caddie was not the player's original ball in play, there was no ball in play for the competitor at that point: Only the player or his partner has authority to place a ball, and only a player, his partner or an authorized person can replace a ball; so the ball set down on the green was neither placed nor replaced and is not a substituted ball in play for the player is it? It is as if the player's ball were still in the pocket of the outside agency, isn't it? Thus, when the player made a stroke at the ball on the green, the ball was neither the ball in play, a ball substituted for the ball in play, nor a second ball under Rule 3-3. Hence, isn't it a wrong ball? If so, doesn't the

player incur a two-stroke penalty, assuming stroke play, for making a stroke at the ball; and doesn't he have to correct the error by playing his original ball from the correct spot on the putting green, before teeing off at the next hole?

A. Here are the answers:

1. You are correct about the responsibility of the players as called for in Rule 6-1 but the Committee generally doesn't hold the player responsible for the type of unauthorized action that took place here. This is true even though we could say that he had ample opportunity to identify his ball. However, remember that the ball wasn't lifted by the player and it is reasonable for him to assume that no one had lifted his ball and substituted another ball.
2. You have a number of misconceptions in your question and narrative. The ball played by the competitor is not a wrong ball since it was put into play by the fellow-competitor's caddie. Even though the fellow-competitor's caddie had no authority to do what he did, Rule 20-4 applies - the ball is in play as a substituted ball. Remember that the caddie did not have the authority to lift the original ball but we still consider the ball to be out of play.
When a stroke is made with an incorrectly substituted ball, normally a penalty is incurred and the player must continue with the substituted ball. In this case, we relieve the player of the penalty but he must continue with the substituted ball. Remember that any time a player intends to put a ball into play by dropping or placing a ball on the course during the play of a hole, it is in play according to Rule 20-4; the same would be true of a ball placed by this caddie. The source [from his pocket, lifted from the ground or the trees, or other such places] of the ball that was put into play is irrelevant. This is a very important principle and directly leads to the difference between a wrong ball and a substituted ball.

Q. I think I am still having some troubles distinguishing wrong ball and incorrect substitution situations. What is the key for learning this?

A. In addition to Decision 15-1/2.5 [Balls Inadvertently Exchanged by Players After One Ball Struck and Moved the Other; One Player Substitutes Balls] mentioned previously, take a look at these following four Decisions:

1. Decision 15/12 [Stray Ball Found Out of Bounds Played Under Stroke-and-Distance Procedure; Original Ball Then Found in Bounds]. This Decision is about a stray ball found out of bounds and not played as it lies, which if it had been so played would be a wrong ball. Since it was lifted and played from the spot of the previous stroke, it is a substituted ball.

2. Decision 15/14 [Ball in Bunker Deemed Unplayable, Dropped in Bunker and Played; Ball Then Discovered to Be Stray Ball]. This Decision is about a stray ball found in a bunker, lifted and played from there. Again, it becomes a substituted ball when dropped, just as in Decision 15/12. Note that the substitution was made at a wrong place, thus resulting in the player having played from a wrong place. However, the ball in question is not a wrong ball but a substituted ball. One of the key points in this Decision, and a practical one at that, is that the player was permitted to identify the ball following the procedure in Rule 12-2 or, having lifted the ball under Rule 28, could have inspected the ball to verify that it was his ball in play. Don't feel sorry for the player as to the situation that he put himself into.
3. Decision 28/14 [Stray Ball Deemed Unplayable Played Under Stroke-and-Distance Procedure; Original Ball Then Found] that also follows along the same lines.
4. Decision 28/15 [Stray Ball Deemed Unplayable, Dropped Within Two Club-Lengths and Played Before Error Discovered] that also follows along the same lines.

These four Decisions are additional keys to learning the difference between a wrong ball and a substituted ball.

Q. Could you give me one more example of a situation that will firm up my understanding of the difference between substituted ball and wrong ball?

A. Here it is:

In stroke play, A, B, and C play their shots from the fairway to an elevated green thought to be 150 yards away. They don't see their balls come to rest but are certain that they are on the green, A to the left, B in the center and C to the right.

When they arrive at the green, there are three balls on the green, one to the left [which A thinks is his], one in the center [which B thinks is his] and one to the right [which C thinks is his].

Without lifting the ball, A makes a stroke at the ball to the left which is holed.

B lifts the ball in the center, cleans it, replaces it and plays it into the hole.

C lifts the ball to the right, deems it unfit, shows it to his fellow-competitors who agree, substitutes another ball from his pocket, places it on the spot where the other ball lay prior to lifting and plays it into the hole.

At that moment, the course superintendent arrives and tells the players that [1] all three of the balls they struck from the fairway are buried in the back greenside bunker, some 30 yards away, and [2] all three balls they found on the green are range balls from the nearby practice tee. He apologizes for the fact that the 150 yard marker is inaccurate and is probably about 100 yards from the center of the green, which explains why their balls are in the back bunker.

Here is the proper ruling:

A played a wrong ball and must correct his error by playing the proper ball in the back bunker. He incurred a penalty of two strokes and the strokes at the wrong ball do not count in his score. A did not play a substituted ball.

Each of B and C has substituted a ball [B, the practice ball he lifted and C, the ball from his pocket] for his original ball by placing a substituted ball on the putting green [Rule 20-4]. Since the location of each original ball was not known at the time of the substitution, each of B and C were required to proceed under Rule 27-1. As the substituted balls were not put into play at the spots required by Rule 27-1, they each played from a wrong place. They each incurred a one-stroke penalty under Rule 27-1 and an additional penalty of two strokes under Rule 27-1 for playing from a wrong place. In this case, each of the breaches of playing from a wrong place was a serious one and both B and C are subject to disqualification unless they correct their errors as provided in Rule 20-7c. Of interest is the fact that there is no penalty for the substitutions as Rule 27-1 permits substitution. Neither B nor C played a wrong ball.

It is irrelevant that the ball B substituted for his original ball was a practice ball or that the ball C substituted for his original ball was actually a ball owned by him. It was their intent to put the substituted balls into play even though they did not know that they were making a substitution. Had they discovered their mistakes before making a stroke at the substituted balls they could have corrected their errors under Rule 20-6 by playing the original balls from the back bunker.

The two key points in this situation are [1] the practice ball that A played was not his ball in play and [2] the balls that B and C played were put into play by them. This is why A played a wrong ball and both B and C played substituted balls.

Rule 16

Q. Decision 16-1a/12 [Player Walks on Line of Putt] says there is no penalty for walking on the line of putt if it is accidental and if it does not improve the line. I understand that.

However, consider a four-ball situation, both balls on the putting green, where a player accidentally touches the putting green with his putter in giving his partner's line of putt.

Should there be no penalty in both situations or is the immunity from penalty limited to accidental "walking" on the line of putt but not accidental "touching" the line of putt?

A. In Decision 16-1a/12, the issue is touching the line of putt either intentionally or accidentally as governed by Rule 16-1a. As your question implies, the immunity from penalty under Rule 16-1a as stated in Decision 16-1a/12 applies to accidental walking on the line of putt provided it is not improved. Additionally, there would be no penalty for accidentally touching the line of putt when a towel falls from a caddie's shoulder or a putter is dropped while a player repairs ball-marks or removes loose impediments.

In your four-ball question, the relevant guidance is in Rule 8-2b, governing the process of indicating the line of play when the ball lies on the putting green. Here the line of putt may be indicated before the stroke but not during the stroke; however, there is a prohibition against touching the putting green in doing so. If there is a breach, the penalty would go to the partner, the person who is to make the stroke.

If the putter is being held above the putting green to indicate the line of putt and the putter touches the putting green either intentionally or accidentally, then there will be a penalty under Rule 8-2b. There is no immunity for accidental touching during this process. However, if the putter were accidentally dropped and it touched the line of putt or the putting green in general, there is no penalty.

There is a related Decision that addresses this issue and the additional one where A in touching the putting green touches his [A's] line of putt in pointing out the line of putt of his partner [B]. Decision 30/2.5 [Player Touches Putting Green in Pointing Out Line of Putt for Partner and Incidentally Touches Own Line of Putt] gives us the answer. The partner [B] is the one with the penalty under Rule 8-2b for the player's [A] action of touching the putting green and the player [A] incurs a penalty under Rule 16-1a for touching his line of putt.

In summary, here are the important ideas associated with your two situations.

Remember that there are four Rules that will principally govern something that happens in these kinds of situations:

1. Rule 8-2a governs positioning someone on an extension beyond the hole for a stroke from off the putting green and placing marks to indicate the line of play.
2. Rule 8-2b governs indicating the line of putt and placing marks to indicate a line of putt.
3. Rule 13-2 governs the line of play and an extension thereof beyond the hole. It is essential to note that the line of play exists everywhere including on the putting green [see Decision 16-1a/4].
4. Rule 16-1 governs the line of putt and others aspects of the putting green. Remember that the line of putt only exists when the player's ball lies on the putting green and, more importantly, the line of putt may, in some situations, include the apron off the putting green for a severely breaking putt.

Both Rules 13-2 and 16-1c [see last paragraph] prohibit improving the line of play beyond the hole, such as tapping down spike marks, although we would say that Rule 16-1c overrides [of course, penalties are the same for both Rules].

Q. Your comment above has inspired me to go back carefully through these four Rules. Of course, that leads me to two follow up questions:

1. Rule 8-2a starts with the phrase "except on the putting green, a player may have the line of play indicated to him by anyone" That qualifier -- except on the putting green -- creates an ambiguity. It could mean that Rule 8-2a only applies to a ball that is not on the putting green. Rule 8-2b seems to support that understanding, since it appears to provide the Rule applicable when the ball is on the putting green.
Alternatively, the qualifier could mean that the authorization to have the line indicated by positioning "anyone" on the line of play or an extension thereof is inapplicable when the ball lies on the green. That construction is arguably a better construction of the sentence itself, and is also supported by the concept in Rule 8-2b that we don't want the line of putt even touched, which suggests a higher standard for balls on the green.
Having also looked at Rules 13-2 and 16, I do not see anything in those two Rules that would prevent a player from having someone stand on an extension of the line of putt beyond the hole while the player is putting the ball, since the line of putt does not itself extend beyond the hole, and since mere standing on an extension of the line of play does not violate Rule 13-2, which requires an improvement in order for a violation to occur.

So the answer must be -- I take it -- that it is Rule 8-2a that prohibits a player from having someone stand on an extension of the line of play beyond the hole when the ball is on the green and the player is striking a putt. Is that right? And if so, why create such a prohibition? What am I not seeing?

2. Does Rule 17-1 override Rule 8? Can a player authorize a person to stand on the line of play holding up the flag that in effect marks the line of play, so long as they are doing so to mark the position of the hole? And can they do that even when the ball is on the putting green and they are in effect standing on an extension of the line of play/putt? The answer is "yes," isn't it?

These are both quite basic questions, which I thought I already knew the answers to. But your statement above has caused me to reread the Rules and now wonder whether the prohibitions and allowances that I thought existed actually reside, if they reside at all.

A. Your questions have some embedded inaccuracies which will be addressed in these answers:

1. This statement of yours is correct - "Rule 8-2a only applies to a ball that is not on the putting green." Rule 8-2 has two parts, the first of which gives guidance for a player whose ball lies off the putting green and the second part which gives guidance for a player whose ball lies on the putting green. These two situations are treated differently in the Rule. Rule 8-2a applies only to a ball not on the putting green and 8-2b applies only to a ball that lies on the putting green. Thus, while Rule 8-2a tells us that the player may not have someone stand beyond the hole for the purpose of indicating the line of play while his stroke from off the green is made, there is no such identical restriction in Rule 8-2b for play of a ball that lies on the green. However, a somewhat related provision in Rule 8-2b says that the player may not have the line of putt pointed out while the stroke on the putting green is made. Additionally, Rule 8-2b also says no mark may be placed anywhere to indicate a line of putt. These two putting green specific provisions mean that a person standing beyond the hole might possibly be in violation of Rule 8-2b, unless he were there for a purpose other than (1) pointing out the line of putt or (2) serving as a mark to indicate the line of putt. For example, a partner could stand beyond the hole if the purpose were to simply observe what happens, not indicating the line of putt or serving as a mark. This statement of yours is not correct - "Rule 8-2a prohibits a player from having someone stand on an extension of the line of play beyond the hole when the ball is on the green and the player is striking a putt." As we said above, Rule 8-2a does not apply to a ball on the putting green but the player must still abide by the restrictions in Rule 8-2b.

2. Regarding Rule 17 overriding Rule 8, the first sentence in Rule 17-1 does just that and this means that sometimes the person indicating the position of the hole by having the flagstick attended or held up must stand on [1] the line of play or [2] the line of putt, although the latter is both undesirable and unlikely.

Q. Am I correct in understanding that Rule 16-2 in effect overrides Rule 17-4 and the Definition of Outside Agency insofar as a ball overhangs the hole? In other words, if a ball comes to rest against a flagstick but does not fall into the hole upon removal of the flagstick but rather moves away from the hole, the player must place the ball on the lip of the hole without penalty; but if having done so, wind then blows the ball into the hole, doesn't Rule 16-2 provide that the ball is deemed to have been holed out with the last stroke and with an additional penalty stroke added to his score?

A. These two Rules [Rule 16-2 and 17-4] govern mutually exclusive events so it is not proper to say that one overrides the other. A ball resting against a flagstick is not in the same physical situation as a ball overhanging the hole. In general, a ball overhanging the hole does not touch the flagstick; a ball resting against the flagstick is of course touching the flagstick and would not be overhanging the hole.

However, in every situation where the player is required to place the ball on the lip of the hole overhanging the hole, it must be at rest before his mission is complete. If it thereafter falls into the hole, Rule 16-2 applies and he is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke and must add a penalty stroke.

Rule 18

Q. Rule 18-2 lists seven Rules including eleven situations where a player does not incur a penalty for moving a ball at rest, provided that the ball is replaced. The first five of these situations are governed by Rule 12-1 and include different types of activities relating to searching. The remaining six situations expressly state that the movement of the ball is not subject to penalty provided that the movement of the ball is "directly attributable" to the specific act authorized by the applicable Rule. So, for example, whereas there is no penalty for inadvertently moving a ball with a club when searching for it when it is believed to be covered by sand anywhere on the course, there would be a penalty for moving a ball with a club when repairing a ball mark with a tee, as I understand it.

Am I misreading the Rules? If not, why the different approach?

A. You are picking up some subtle points that are very important and you are not misreading the Rules.

Rule 18-2 lists the instances where there is no penalty for a ball moved, although, as you have pointed out, the first, searching for or identifying a ball, has five components: [a] ball covered by sand moved during touching/moving sand, [b] ball covered by sand moved during re-creation of lie, [c] ball covered by loose impediments moved during replacement of loose impediments, [d] ball lying in water in a water hazard moved during probing, and [e] ball within an obstruction or abnormal ground condition moved during searching.

The reason that there is more latitude in searching and identifying in these special circumstances is that it would be unreasonable, or in some case nearly impossible, to find a ball in a reasonable amount of time if the player were to be expected to exert the same degree of care as otherwise regarding movement of the ball.

For example, if a ball is believed to be covered by sand, there is question whether a ball could be found in a reasonable period of time if the search must be conducted in such a restricted manner that the player would never move the ball. If a ball is in an obstruction such as a filled trash can or a muddy area of long grass classified as an abnormal ground condition, it would be very difficult to find a ball under the condition that the ball not be moved.

Q. Decisions 18-1/8 [Ball Moved by Stone Dislodged by Partner's Or Opponent's Stroke] and 18-3b/2 [Opponent's Stroke Disturbs Bushes Causing Player's Ball to Move] seem like they are in tension with each other, particularly when read in light of 18-2/20.5 [Player's Practice Swing Moves Loose Impediment Which Moves Ball].

If the bush, like the stone, moves, and thus is the direct intervening cause of the ball at rest being moved, I wonder why the player incurs a penalty for causing the bush to move the ball, but not for causing the stone to move the ball. Is it because we deem the likelihood of the two to be so different than we require the player to use Rule 22-2 to avoid the potential moving of the opponent's ball in the case of the bush but not in the case of the stone?

A. Yes - they are different to the extent that we have drawn a line between what we can/should logically control and what is simply the result of properly playing the game. The two common threads in each of these Decisions are [1] whether it is reasonably

foreseeable that a player's actions would have a particular result and [2] whether it is possible through exercising reasonable care to avoid an undesirable result.

Q. I must be getting dense. I have read Decision 18-2/1 [Player Who Misses Tee Shot Tees Ball Lower Before Making Next Stroke] three times. I have read Rule 27-1a three times. I understand Rule 27-1a. I do not understand Decision 18-2/1 or why Rule 27-1a applies to it.

There is no lost ball here. There is a ball in play after a stroke. The player has then moved that ball at rest. He has not replaced it, but has instead played it from a wrong place.

I understand how Rule 18 and Rule 20 work, such that this would only be two penalty strokes rather than three penalty strokes, as well as the original stroke and then the second stroke. But I do not understand how Rule 27-1a applies such that there is a result of this only being a single penalty stroke situation.

A. You are not dense. The relationships of the content of these Rules and Decisions are a bit subtle and the complete rationale is not completely explained in Decision 18-2/1 itself. You are correct in that there is no lost ball in the situation. As this explanation evolves below, remember the facts are that the player had a ball in play on the tee within the teeing ground. Then he decided to play his second stroke from within the teeing ground and made this decision before pushing his tee further into the ground. In other words, he followed the dictates of Rules 27-1a and 20-5.

Rule 27-1a contains one of the fundamental principles of golf, which is that a player may always play a stroke from the spot of the previous stroke under a one-stroke penalty. And a ball doesn't have to be lost for a player to follow this Rule as it has far reaching applications beyond a lost ball situation. Some Rules incorporate this principle as a part of those Rules, as for example, Rules 26-1a, 27-1b, 27-1c and 28a, which as can be seen are a mixture of lost ball situations and those where the original ball may not be lost.

There is another closely-related principle appearing in Decision 18-2/11 [Tee Shot Wrongly Thought to Be Out of Bounds Lifted; Competitor Plays Another Ball from Tee]. That principle is formulated as follows. If a player lifts his ball in play without authority under a specific Rule, he is generally assessed a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 and must replace the ball. However, in Decision 18-2/11, before he lifted the ball, he had the intention of playing from the spot of the previous stroke [Rule 20-5], the procedure specified by Rule 27-1a, and this procedure overrides Rule 18-2 even if he is not completely aware of the requirements of the Rule he is applying. This means that if

he doesn't replace the ball at the original spot and plays from the spot of the previous stroke, he will only be assessed a one-stroke penalty under Rule 27-1a, provided that he had the intention to play from the spot of the previous stroke before the ball was lifted. Otherwise Rule 18-2 applies, not Rule 27-1a.

Now to the point of Decision 18-2/1. Not surprisingly, the principles of both Decision 18-2/11 and Rule 27-1a are at work here. The player has made a stroke and the ball came to rest on the teeing ground. Actually the stroke at the ball missed and the ball never took flight at all, but it is in play. Now, he pushes the tee into the ground, which is the equivalent to lifting or moving the ball contrary to Rule 18-2. However, before he moved the ball, it was his intention to play his next stroke from where the ball was teed, which is within the teeing ground and which is an action the same as that in Decision 18-2/11. In playing from the teeing ground as the spot of the previous stroke, playing from anywhere within the teeing ground satisfies Rule 20-5. The player himself probably never heard of Decision 18-2/11, Rule 20-5 or Rule 27-1a but they coincidentally apply to his behavior just the same.

Q. With respect to Decision 18-2/12.5 [Player Entitled to Relief Without Penalty from Condition Lifts Ball; Chooses Not to Take Relief and Wishes to Proceed Under the Unplayable Ball Rule], I understand it all until I get to option 4. I understand that we can proceed directly under 28a when the player decides to change relief options, since no reference point is required to execute the chosen relief. But since the player did not lift with the intent to take stroke and distance relief, why is there no Rule 18 penalty, as Decision 27-2b/10 [Provisional Ball Lifted Subsequently Becomes Ball in Play; Competitor Then Plays from Wrong Place] suggests?

A. If after lifting the ball under Rule 24, the player decides he doesn't want to proceed under Rule 24, he may replace the ball at the original spot with a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2. If he then wishes to proceed under Rule 28b or c, he will incur an additional one-stroke penalty under that Rule. That is option 1.

In option 4, if after lifting without penalty under Rule 24, the player wants to proceed directly under Rule 28a, there is no Rule 18 penalty because if he dropped it under Rule 24 that fact would not change the reference point for applying Rule 28a so we don't require him to first drop it under Rule 24, which would be superfluous.

In Decision 27-2b/10, the provisional ball was lifted without authority and Rule 18 immediately applied to that act and no further actions on his part, such as playing the provisional ball under penalty of stroke and distance, can erase the penalty already incurred.

Q. I thought I understood Decision 18-2/12.5 [Player Entitled to Relief Without Penalty from Condition Lifts Ball; Chooses Not to Take Relief and Wishes to Proceed Under the Unplayable Ball Rule] and why a player may not switch to the unplayable ball Rule after lifting under Rule 24. But then along comes Decision 28/13 [After Deeming Ball Unplayable and Lifting It, Player Discovers Ball Was in Ground Under Repair], which leaves me puzzled again because the player lifted the ball under the unplayable ball Rule and is allowed to change his mind and switch to Rule 25. I thought I had these principles down, but Decision 28/13 has confused me. Why is the player allowed to proceed under a different Rule without penalty here, but not in 18-2/12.5, except option 4 which I understand?

A. These two very, very important Decisions have to be understood and memorized exactly as they are written; and remember that they really are different. Yes, the player is not allowed to proceed under a different Rule in Decision 18-2/12.5 without penalty. Yes, the player is allowed to proceed under a different Rule in Decision 28/13 without penalty, but take a close look at how this occurs. There are major differences in the two situations:

1. In Decision 18-2/12.5, the player lifts the ball under a Rule that does not involve a penalty [Rule 24]. He must [1] proceed under that Rule without penalty and then deem it unplayable under Rule 28 with a one-stroke penalty or [2] replace it with a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18 and then deem it unplayable under Rule 28 with an additional one-stroke penalty.
2. In Decision 28/13, the player lifts the ball under a Rule that involves a penalty [Rule 28], without knowing that he could have lifted under a Rule that didn't incur a penalty. Thus, provided he has not put the ball into play under Rule 28, he may proceed under Rule 25, or even Rule 24 if the case may be, without penalty. The key points are that [1] he lifted the ball under Rule 28 that involves a penalty, [2] he could have lifted the ball under a Rule without penalty and [3] he has not yet put the ball into play under Rule 28; therefore, he may change his mind and proceed under a different Rule without penalty.

The common thread within these two Decisions is twofold: [1] the player proceeded under an applicable Rule when lifting the ball in play and [2] the player had not subsequently put that ball into play when a doubt arose about the lifting. Additionally, there is no application of Rule 20-6 for correction of error.

Q. Just a follow-up to make sure that I understand it. If the player thought the ball was in a water hazard and lifted to take relief with penalty, and then realized that in fact the ball was in casual water outside the water hazard, would the principle of Decision 28/13 [After Deeming Ball Unplayable and Lifting It, Player Discovers Ball Was in Ground Under Repair] apply here as well? It seems like it should.

A. Actually this is a different situation in that this time the ball in play was lifted under an inapplicable Rule [Rule 26-1] since his ball did not lie in a water hazard. As his ball lay in casual water where the applicable Rule is Rule 25-1b, he has two options under Rule 20-6: [1] replace his ball with a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2, or [2] proceed directly under Rule 25-1b without replacing the ball and without penalty. Your player could proceed under either of these two options even if he had dropped the ball but not played it. For a somewhat similar situation that establishes the two options for proceeding under Rule 20-6 in correcting his error, see Decision 25-1b/26 [Player Unaware Ball in Water Hazard Takes Relief from Interference by Burrowing Animal Hole].

Q. One final follow-up to summarize it all.

Suppose a player lifts his ball to take relief from an immovable obstruction or an abnormal ground condition, that is, a lift without penalty. He then discontinues with that relief option, before dropping the ball on the course, because he fears that he will end up with an unplayable lie. At that point, he could take relief, under a one-stroke penalty, back to the spot of the last stroke he made. If he had dropped the ball under the free relief Rules, he could also go to that spot under Rule 28a, incurring only one penalty shot, just as we allow him to incur only one penalty stroke if he proceeded under Rule 28b or 28c using as a reference point the spot of the unplayable lie after dropping under the free relief Rules.

If he initially lifts without penalty but then replaces so that he can take unplayable lie relief from the point in the immovable obstruction or abnormal ground condition, then we give him a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18 for having lifted without authority, because he did not continue with the authority granted by Rule 24 or Rule 25, and an additional one-stroke penalty under Rule 28a or 28b or 28c for the relief that he subsequently takes under those Rules.

This latter situation is distinguished from other situations where the player has apparently lifted without authority under a Rule -- e.g., he thought his ball was out of bounds but it was not -- but at the time of lifting he intended to go back to the spot of the previous shot [and he goes there]. In those instances, although the lift was under a misconception about his situation, we penalize him only under Rule 27-1a, not under

Rule 18 as well, because Rule 27-1a allows a player to play from the spot of the previous stroke.

But if he lifted without authority and did not intend to return to the spot of the previous shot at the time of the unauthorized lift, he is subject to penalty under Rule 18 for lifting a ball at rest without authority, and we will determine whether he gets additional penalties by how he then proceeds.

Is that it? And if it is, I wonder whether I will be able to do this under pressure at a tournament or on an exam?

A. That's it and good luck at the golf course, where you will have your radio, or on an exam, where you will be on your own.

Q. In Decision 18-2/32 [Ball Touched with Fir Cone or Stick to Prevent Movement When Loose Impediment Removed], we only penalize the player a single penalty stroke for taking a deliberate action to prevent the movement of the ball at rest. Why doesn't Rule 1-2 apply in this circumstance?

A. Rule 1-2 deals with [1] taking an action with the intent to exert influence on the movement of a ball in play and [2] altering physical conditions with the intent of affecting the playing of a hole. The Rule doesn't regulate preventing movement of a ball at rest by means that does not involve altering physical conditions. Furthermore, if the player had not touched the ball with the stick and it moved during the removal of a loose impediment, the penalty would only have been one stroke for such movement, certainly proportional to his transgression and the same penalty that he would incur for purposely touching, a direct violation of Rule 18-2. See also Decision 24-1/4 [Holding Ball in Place While Removing Obstruction].

Finally, you will note that Exception 1 to Rule 1-2 states that an action expressly permitted or expressly prohibited by another Rule is subject to that other Rule, not Rule 1-2.

Q. Why is there a difference in treatment for the player in Decision 18-2/32 and that in Decision 33-7/7 [Competitor Seeks Help from Fellow-Competitor to Avoid Penalty], which imposes a disqualification penalty on a player who solicits the assistance of a fellow competitor in preventing the movement of the ball at rest,

A. The latter Decision addresses an aspect of the situation preventing movement of a ball at rest that goes way beyond any simple touching of the ball as regulated by Rule

18. What happened in Decision 33-7/7 is something truly outside the Rules [involving someone else in his game who is not a member of his side or caddie] and so exceptional that it is properly characterized in the Decision as "contrary to the spirit of the game," which it is, and which warrants a disqualification penalty.

The two situations covered by these two Decisions appear somewhat similar but intrinsically are much different, thus with different outcomes.

As an aside, these two Decisions illustrate the often needed evaluation of a player's intent in many situations that otherwise might be considered the same, which in fact are not. There are numerous such Decisions in the book.

Rule 19

Q. What is the difference between "moving" and "animate" outside agencies as applied to the case of an agency deflecting a ball?

A. Within the context of the Rules of Golf, the word "animate" refers to agencies possessing life within the animal kingdom, such as people, cats and dogs and even caddies, as distinct from plant life, such as leaves, grasses or trees [as further to an animate agency see also Decision 19-1/7 Ball Picked Up or Deflected by Dog After Stroke on Putting Green]. Consider these two examples.

If a caddie, who is an outside agency, moves across the line of putt and deflects a ball, he would count for both moving and animate, so it is immaterial whether he is moving or stopped at the time that he deflects a ball for Rule 19-1b to apply. Similarly, if a dog, which is an animate outside agency, is at rest and deflects a moving ball, Rule 19-1b would apply.

However, unlike the dog example, if a ball in motion after a stroke on the putting green were to be deflected by a growing mushroom, the deflection is by an outside agency that is not animate and Rule 19-1 applies such that the deflected ball would be played as it lies. By the way, as a piece of trivia, mushrooms are mentioned only once in the Decisions book as the subject of an interesting Decision on discontinuing play in Decision 16-1a/15 [Mushroom Growing on Line of Putt].

If a ball, after a stroke on the putting green, is deflected by a wind-blown leaf, which is an outside agency, moving across the line of putt, Rule 19-1b would require a replay, as the leaf is a moving outside agency. If the ball is deflected by a stationary leaf, Rule 19-1 applies such that the deflected ball would be played as it lies. Telling the difference between a moving and a stationary agency is a question of fact.

If an outside agency is not moving, then it must be animate for Rule 19-1b to apply.

Note that in Rule 19-1b, live worms and insects are exempt from the Rule, although they are animate outside agencies. Also note that in Rule 19 as a whole we are dealing with accidental deflections and stopping where Rule 1-2 deals with purposeful influencing of the movement of a ball in play.

However, the Note to Rule 19-1 provides guidance to the player when his ball is deliberately deflected or stopped by an outside agency.

Q. I am having a little trouble with Decision 19-5/1 [Player Lifts His Ball on Putting Green and Sets It Aside; Opponent's or Fellow-Competitor's Ball Played from Green Subsequently Strikes Player's Ball]. Since A's ball in motion was deflected by B's equipment, I understand that Rule 19-3 applies in match play and that A has the option of playing the ball as it lies or cancelling and replaying the stroke. But, in stroke play, since this is a ball in motion after a stroke on the green deflected by equipment of an outside agency, why isn't the stroke cancelled and the ball replaced and replayed?

A. Rule 19-5a, which covers a ball in motion after a stroke deflected by a ball in play and at rest, does not apply to the deflecting ball in Decision 19-5/1 as that ball was not in play. So we must look to Rule 19-1 for guidance. In stroke play, the agency that deflected A's ball was not a "moving or animate outside agency" such that Rule 19-1b applies. Rather it is Rule 19-1a and Rule 19-4 that apply and A must play his ball as it lies without penalty.

Q. With regard to Decision 19-5/5 [Provisional Ball Struck by Original Ball], I understand this Decision and it makes good sense to me that Rule 19-2 doesn't apply since the provisional ball is not equipment as we know from Decision 18/7 [Explanation of "Any Ball He Has Played"]. But the Decision 19-5/5 does not say whether or not the provisional that was moved should be replaced. Or is it irrelevant because now that the original ball is found, the provisional has to be abandoned?

A. Yes.

However, consider the case where the player plays the provisional ball because he believes that his tee shot might be out of bounds, and then on finding his original ball is uncertain whether it is out of bounds. If he decides to proceed under Rule 3-3, he must use the provisional ball as a second ball under Rule 3-3 as per Decision 3-3/1 [Provisional Ball Used as Second Ball When Not Determinable Whether Original Ball Is Out of Bounds]. If the original ball later moves that provisional/second ball at rest, the

original ball is played as it lies and the provisional/second ball must be replaced as per Decision 3-3/7 [Original Ball Strikes Second Ball or Vice Versa]. Rule 18-5 requires that a ball at rest must be replaced if moved by another ball in motion after a stroke and would apply if the provisional ball were to become the ball in play.

Rule 20

Q. Many of the Rules state that, when taking relief, a ball must be dropped "not nearer the hole" than something -- e.g., where the original ball lies, the nearest point of relief, or the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard. My questions:

1. Does this mean that, if the ball first strikes a spot on the course that is closer to the hole than the reference point in the Rule, it is improperly dropped, even if the ball comes to rest not nearer the hole than the reference point in the Rule? Is that what the second sentence in Rule 20-2b is identifying?
2. Does this mean that, if the player proceeded to play the ball after such a drop where the ball first struck a point closer to the hole but came to rest not closer to the hole and otherwise in complete compliance with the applicable Rules, the player would have played from a wrong place, with a resulting penalty?
3. If the player does not proceed to play but instead proceeds to correct under Rule 20-6, does he now still get the unlimited drops contemplated by Rule 20-2a or the two drops contemplated by Rule 20-2c?

A. Answers:

1. If a ball when dropped first strikes the course nearer the hole than the reference point specified in a particular Rule, it must be re-dropped regardless of where it comes to rest. Rule 20-2b was added in 1992 to clarify this very situation.
2. If the player played the ball, regardless of where it came to rest, he would be considered to have played from a wrong place [see Rule 20-7a] and would incur the general penalty specified by the Rule under which he was taking relief.

3. The player may correct his error under Rule 20-6. The re-drop would be under the particular Rule that he dropped the ball in the first instance, not Rule 20-2c, as the latter Rule applies for drops that are properly made and where the ball comes to rest in any of the specified seven conditions. Since Rule 20-2c doesn't apply, the counting of drops for placing is inapplicable. This means that he has unlimited drops to get it right with respect to dropping in the correct place. This means that an official guiding a player through a situation similar to this must use the proper terminology to describe what happened.

If the ball strikes the course in a wrong place, you should tell the player exactly that, making sure that there is no misunderstanding about only one more drop required. Don't say, "That ball is not in play," for an incorrect drop since the ball is in play, although it was dropped on the wrong spot. If it is properly dropped, rolls and come to rest in a spot where re-dropping is required, tell the player that it has come to rest nearer the hole, or whatever is appropriate based on Rule 20-2c requirements, and must be re-dropped once again. Sometimes there is confusion that is caused by use of incorrect terminology and that should be avoided.

Q. What about the Rules that say the ball must be "replaced" as contrasted with the Rules that say the ball must be dropped, such as the one where the ball comes to rest on the player or his equipment and it must be "dropped." There is no definition of "replace," so my question is does it include "dropping" or am I just missing something obvious?

A. Whenever a Rule or a Decision says "place" or "replace" a ball on a spot, it means just that, not drop, unless the spot is not determinable for some reason. In the case of the spot not determinable, the spot must be estimated and the player must drop the ball as near as possible to the estimated spot as per Rule 20-3c, unless the original spot was on a putting green. In the latter situation, the ball must be replaced as near as possible to the estimated spot. All of this means that sometimes we replace by dropping -- a very confusing concept to many.

There is no definition of either of the terms -- place or replace -- so we just use commonsense everyday understandings.

Q. Suppose that a ball came to rest, wedged between a tree and an item of the player's equipment such as a golf bag placed against the tree. Would that be a "drop" or a "replace" situation when the obstruction is moved?

A. If the ball was touching the tree, it would be considered to have a position on the course rather than lying on the player's equipment. In the former situation, the ball would be played as it lies after removing the equipment. If it would not remain at rest as is likely, it would be placed at the nearest spot where it would remain at rest as per Rule 20-3d. This is not a drop situation.

Q. In Decision 20-2a/4 [Ball Dropped in Improper Manner Moves When Addressed; Player Then Lifts Ball and Drops It in Proper Manner], the suggestion is that the player incurs only a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 when his ball moved after address. But the Decision does not say that, after the ball so moved, the player replaced the ball, before going through the subsequent correction under Rule 20-6. So, unless something else in the Rules provides otherwise, the penalty provision of Rule 18 seems to suggest that the general penalty is applicable to the situation in this Decision.

Now I understand that common sense tells us that, since the player is going to re-drop, as a practical matter, there is no good reason to require him to replace. And I recognize that Rule 20-6 says that, if a ball has been incorrectly dropped and not played, it may be lifted and the player may then proceed correctly. So Rule 20-6 probably does not care whether the player has replaced the ball.

But, as a technical matter, is there anything that overrides the requirement of Rule 18 that the player must replace the ball and, if he has failed to do so, that he gets the general penalty rather than the single stroke penalty.

What am I overlooking, if anything?

A. You have overlooked nothing, but see Decision 20-3a/3 [Whether Ball Must Be Replaced If Other Rule Applies].

You have asked a fundamental question, that is, what is the justification in the Rules not to replace a ball when Rule 18 plainly says replace before doing something else or certainly before making a stroke? There is at present nothing in the Rules except this Decision to generally allow a "non-replacement" in situations where another Rule applies.

Some Rules such as Rule 12-1 covers this business with words such as "the ball must be replaced unless the player elects to proceed under . . ."; however, look how complicated or wordy this Rule is. Should there be this type of wording in a slew of Rules, as for example, Rule 24, or try to cover it in a single place such as Rule 18?

Perhaps in the present case we could just conclude that Rule 20-6 overrides the requirements of Rule 18 to replace the ball.

Q. There are some things I don't understand about Decision 20-2c/3.5 [Dropped Ball Comes to Rest and Then Rolls Out of Bounds].

To begin with, where is the spot from which the original ball was last played?

A. Before answering your question, let's first describe the situation.

In Decision 20-2c/3.5, the player's ball was in play and at rest in bounds after the player dropped it under the unplayable ball Rule [Rule 28c]. At that point, he has satisfied the requirements of Rule 28c as well as Rule 20-2c.

Unfortunately, the ball subsequently moved and came to rest out of bounds. He now has a new situation. Because his ball now lies out of bounds, he is required to proceed under the out of bounds Rule [Rule 27-1b]. This Rule states, "If a ball is out of bounds, the player must play a ball, under penalty of one stroke, as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played (see Rule 20-5)."

Now to your question - "Where is the spot from which the original ball was last played?"

Here is a clarification of the above phrases in Rule 27-1b that will give us a clue to the answer to your question.

The words in Rule 27-1b, at the spot from which the original ball was last played, are equivalent in meaning to from the place where the last stroke was made at the original ball. In your situation, the player did not make a stroke from the spot where the ball struck the course when it was dropped according to the unplayable ball Rule. He also did not make a stroke from the spot where it came to rest in bounds before rolling out of bounds.

The spot from which the original ball was last played is the spot from which he last made a stroke at the ball that, as a result of the stroke, came to rest against the boundary stake.

Rules 20-2b and 20-5 will tell her how to proceed at that spot.

As a summary, consider the following. A player makes a stroke at a ball from the fairway at Point A and the ball comes to rest at Point B where it lies against a boundary stake. The player deems the ball unplayable, lifts it and drops it, where the ball strikes the course at Point C. It rolls and comes to rest in bounds at Point D. A few seconds later it moves due to gravity and comes to rest at Point E, which is out of bounds. For the player's next stroke, he must follow Rules 20-2b, 20-5 and 27-1b and drop a ball in the fairway as near as possible at Point A, the spot from which the original ball was last played, that is, the place where the last stroke was made at the original ball.

Q. I understand what Decision 20-2c/3.5 [Dropped Ball Comes to Rest and Then Rolls Out of Bounds] says, but I want to check about some things that it does not say:

1. If a ball at rest moved and came to rest out of bounds, the player must now proceed under Rule 27-1b. This Rule requires the player to play a ball, under a one-stroke penalty, "as nearly as possible from the spot where the original ball was last played." As applied to this Decision, I read that to mean that the player in this Decision must return not to the spot where he took relief from his unplayable lie against the boundary stake, but rather to the spot from which he played the ball that ended up against the boundary stake and the unplayable lie from which he took relief. Is that rather harsh result correct?
2. If so, then the poor decision that I attributed to a player at a recent tournament was even worse than I thought. He hit his tee shot into a lateral water hazard. Instead of considering all of his options under Rule 26, such as keeping the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard between and the hole and going back for his drop where he could get a level lie and an opening in the trees, he immediately measured two club-lengths on the side of the hill, under the overhanging trees, and dropped. Of course, the ball rolled into the hazard, and he was required to re-drop. It again rolled into the hazard and he then placed the ball properly in a precarious side-hill lie position where his only shot was sideways, where he had to deal with an overhanging branch, and where the ball could easily have moved again even though it was at rest. I thought this might be ill-advised for leaving himself with a poor shot or, even worse, at risk of the ball going into the hazard again. I did not realize that, had it gone into the hazard from its spot at rest without him having made a stroke, he would have been required to return to the tee. Do I understand that correctly?

A. Here are the answers:

1. Is that rather harsh result correct? - Yes.
This player is having a really bad day. First, his ball comes to rest against a boundary stake, from which he must take an unplayable ball relief. Then, his ball on its own moves out of bounds and now he must incur another penalty stroke according to Rule 27-1b. However, there is no other possible answer. When a ball lies out of bounds, the Rule requires that he must play a ball from the spot of the previous stroke - no leeway here, only one possible spot according to the Rule.

2. You wrote that, “had it gone into the lateral hazard from its spot at rest without him having taken a stroke, he would have been required to return to the tee.” Do I understand that correctly? The answer is no. Since his ball would have lay in the lateral water hazard, he could have again taken relief according to Rule 26-1, based on where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard before it came to rest in the hazard at its present position,. The Rule doesn't restrict this provision to relief based on where a ball crosses the margin as a result of a stroke. Of course, one of the options of Rule 26-1 is to return to the spot of the last stroke but that may not be the best option and it is not required.

However, see also Decision 28/4.5 [Ball Deemed Unplayable Through the Green Dropped in Water Hazard; Player Elects Not to Play Ball and Wishes to Proceed Under the Water Hazard Rule], which is similar but with a major point of difference - there is no point of crossing since the ball was dropped in the hazard and his only option is to return to the spot of the last stroke.

Q. In Decision 20-2c/4 [Caddie Stops Dropped Ball Before It Comes to Rest; When Penalty Incurred], apparently the caddie mistakenly thinks he is stationed more than two club-lengths away from the point of dropping but is not and stops the ball before it has rolled beyond a position for which a re-drop is required by Rule 20-2c. The Decision further states that if the ball was lifted after it was stopped, the ball must be replaced. Is there a separate penalty for this latter action? Suppose that he lifts the ball and tosses it to the player, who drops it and then plays it from the position at which it has come to rest, would there be a penalty?

A. The player is in violation of Rule 1-2 for his caddie's stopping of the ball before it reached a re-drop situation under Rule 20-2c and the ball must be played as it lies. In your situation, the acts of stopping the ball and lifting the ball are close to one another in terms of time and there are no intervening acts. Accordingly, the two acts are related acts and a single penalty of two strokes under Rule 1-2 is appropriate under Principle 4 in Decision 1-4/12 [Player Breaches Rules More Than Once; Whether Multiple Penalties Should Be Applied]. However, the player did not replace the lifted ball but rather dropped it. The failure to replace the ball is considered a separate act and he incurs an additional penalty of two strokes under Rule 18-2. See Decision 13-4/15 [Ball in Hazard Moves When Loose Impediment Removed].

An important part of Decision 20-2c/4 is the last paragraph. It tells us that if a player authorizes another person to violate Rule 1-2, the player incurs a penalty for a violation of Rule 1-2. If the other person were another player [or his caddie], the other person would also incur a penalty under Rule 1-2.

Q. I now have a question on the "re-drop" Rules as construed by the Decisions involving changing options within a Rule or changing Rules. Would the following guidelines be correct?

1. When required to re-drop under Rule 20-2a and 20-2c, a player may not change the option under the Rule that the player invoked in taking the initial drop.
2. When allowed to re-drop under Rule 20-6, the player may use a different option under the specific Rule invoked in the initial drop, but may not re-drop under a completely different Rule.
3. Exception: A player may always invoke a different Rule than originally intended when a ball has been lifted but not yet dropped or placed, i.e., put back into play.

A. Here are the answers:

1. True - see Decision 20-2c/5 [Changing Relief Option When Re-Dropping Required] and other Decisions referenced under this Decision.
2. Maybe - see Decision 20-6/2 [Changing Relief Option After Ball Dropped in a Wrong Place]. If the player has dropped under an applicable Rule but in a wrong place then he is struck with that Rule until he gets it right with respect to that Rule; however, we note that he may change options because he dropped in a wrong place. If he has dropped under an inapplicable Rule, then he may proceed under any applicable Rule.
3. Partially true but not necessarily without penalty. To illustrate how involved this can become, refer to Decision 18-2/12.5 [Player Entitled to Relief Without Penalty from Condition Lifts Ball; Chooses Not to Take Relief and Wishes to Proceed Under the Unplayable Ball Rule] and Decision 28/13 [After Deeming Ball Unplayable and Lifting It, Player Discovers Ball Was in Ground Under Repair]. In the former Decision, also note option 4, a particularly clever but correct conclusion.

Q. I see that the guidelines that I formulated are imprecise at best and only partially correct. Are there principles that could be articulated here, as I have tried but failed to do, or are we just left with these ad hoc guidelines?

A. Yes. Some principles are evident and correct to follow.

1. If a player has put a ball into play under an inapplicable Rule but not played, he may use Rule 20-6 to correct his error, which means proceeding under any applicable Rule.
2. If a player puts a ball into play under an inapplicable Rule and plays it, the Committee will select the applicable Rule by which to judge his actions - see Decision 34-3/6 [Player Proceeds Under an Inapplicable Rule; Committee's Decision]. Since the ball was played, he may not correct his error under Rule 20-6.
3. If a player puts a ball into play under an applicable Rule, but has not yet played it, he must continue under that Rule until he gets it right, which may mean lifting and re-dropping [or placing as required] if he made a mistake - see next. He may not change to a different Rule during this process without penalty until he has satisfied the requirements of the applicable Rule.
4. If a player puts a ball into play under an applicable Rule but has not yet played it and he initially dropped on a wrong place, then he may proceed under any of the options available under the applicable Rule when correcting his error under Rule 20-6.
5. If a player has lifted a ball under either an applicable Rule or an inapplicable Rule and changes his mind about what he wants to do, prior to dropping it, he may always replace the ball at the previous spot with a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2.

Q. Here is another question that I wanted to ask you about.

A player hits his approach shot onto the green. He marks the spot where the ball lies with a coin behind the spot, lifts his ball and hands it to his caddie to clean it, while the player is walking around the green examining the green and how the putt might break. Rather than hand the ball back to the player, the caddie instead walks up to the coin and places the ball in front of the coin. The player then walks up to the ball, rotates the ball so that his mark is in the direction of his intended line, removes the coin, and strokes the putt. How many penalty strokes, if any, does the player incur?

My analysis is as follows. The player properly marked the position of the ball and lifted it. Since the ball was lifted on the green, the player was entitled to have the ball cleaned. The caddie, however, was not authorized to replace the ball, since he had not been the one to lift it on authorization from the player. The player corrected that problem, however, by rotating the ball himself and in effect replacing it himself; or one

could say that the player used Rule 20-6 to correct the improper replacement. Thus there should be no penalty.

However, I am uncertain of that answer regarding no penalty to the player. Here is my reasoning. Initially, it was not clear to me that the caddie had put the ball back into play, even though he was not authorized by the Rules to do the replacement. Moreover, as I reflected on it, even if the unauthorized action could put the ball back into play, there seemed to me to be another issue. What about the fact that the caddie, who did not have authorization under Rule 20 to replace a ball, in the course of improperly putting that ball on the spot from which the ball had been lifted, touched the player's line of putt, i.e., the spot on the green where the line of putt begins?

It is one thing to say that the player could make the replacement that the caddie could not, or that the player can use Rule 20-6 to correct the improper placement. Isn't it an entirely different thing to say that the player's action could somehow correct the fact that the Rules did not authorize the caddie to touch the line of putt, which the caddie did when he placed the player's lifted ball --which was still equipment while it was in the caddie's fingers-- on the line of putt?

The only thing that I could locate to help with this question is Decision 20-4/2 [Ball Lifted by Player from Putting Green and Placed by Caddie Behind Marker]. But that Decision very carefully limits itself to a situation in which the caddie "places the ball immediately behind the coin, i.e., not in the ball's original position to allow the player to assess the line of putt from behind the hole," and goes on to state, "The ball is not considered to be in play until the player repositions it with the intention of replacing the ball as required by Rule 16-1b." Thus, while certainly not dispositive, the Decision supported my instinct that the ball might not be back in play just because the caddie put the ball on the spot from which it had been lifted, since the Rules do not authorize the caddie to put the ball back in play in these circumstances, but rather required the player to do, and it also left open the question of whether Rule 16 is violated if a person without authority to replace a ball touches the line of putt by so attempting to replace a ball on the green.

I cannot find anything in the Rules or the Decisions that authorized the touching of the line of putt in this way. Do you have any thoughts on this one? I have gone carefully over the Rules, and still find no authority to excuse the touching of the line with the ball that had been lifted.

A. You have the essence of the question and part of the proper answer in that improper replacement of the ball is not a violation of Rule 16-1 regarding touching the line of putt.

In reading the question from Decision 20-4/2, it certainly seems that the caddie had no intention to put the ball into play by "replacing" it or "putting it down," only to put it on the green for the player to assess the LOP. If that is true, then the ball was not in play. The

issue is not whether the caddie had the authority to replace the ball and whether lacking that authority a replaced ball would be in play. If he intended to put the ball into play, either lacking authority or not, the replaced ball would be in play [Rule 20-4].

Although only the player, his partner or the person who lifted the ball is permitted to replace it, Rule 20-3a contemplates the possibility of someone other than the authorized persons putting a ball into play and provides a one-stroke penalty if the error is uncorrected. Although a caddie who did not lift the ball is not specifically authorized by the Rules to replace it, if he intends to put it into play by placing, then we should consider that it has been replaced and is in play even if the replacing is unauthorized. If the player were to make a stroke at the ball, he is violation of Rule 20-3a, not Rule 15-3, since the ball is in play.

In a situation of a caddie simply putting a ball down on the putting green, it is a question of fact as to whether the ball is in play - it depends on the intentions of the caddie. If he intends to put the ball into play even if it is an unauthorized replacing on the spot where the ball originally lay, then his possible touching of the line of putt is covered by the exception to Rule 16-1a. However, in the very unusual case where he doesn't intend to put the ball into play but only to indicate the line of putt or to simply return the ball to the player in this way, then any touching of the line of putt anywhere coincident with the act would be a violation of Rule 16-1a.

Finally, if the caddie had placed the ball on the original spot, the presumption is that he intended to put it into play unless there is strong evidence to the contrary.

Q. Suppose that a player made a stroke from the teeing ground, the ball hit a tree and came to rest back on the teeing ground. The player then plays the ball as it lies on the teeing ground and hits an iron out of bounds. Does Rule 20-5 allow the player to play his next stroke from the teeing ground with the ball teed up so he can now hit a driver?

A. When the player's ball initially came to rest in play and within the teeing ground as a result of a stroke before he played the ball out of bounds, he was required to play the ball as it lies without teeing it up. Rule 11-1 permits teeing the ball only when a player is putting a ball into play from the teeing ground.

If the player is subsequently required to play his next stroke from the spot of the previous stroke, Rule 20-5 applies. If this spot of the next stroke is within the teeing ground in the circumstances that you describe, then Rule 20-5 applies. That means he may play from anywhere within the teeing ground and the ball may be teed. Additionally, under Rule 13-2, he may also create or eliminate irregularities of the surface of the teeing ground at any time.

Q. This so-called "eraser Rule" [Rule 20-6] is still puzzling me a bit:

1. Does the word "incorrectly" modify only "substituted," or does it modify "substituted, dropped, or placed"? How does one "incorrectly substitute . . . in a wrong place"?
2. I am also a little confused about what the phrase "wrong place" adds to the sentence, given that the next clause seems to bring the entirety of the Rules into play, or at least the Rules dealing with substitution, dropping and placing.
3. Am I correct that the Rule means: "incorrectly substituted, incorrectly dropped, or incorrectly placed" in violation of the respective Rules on substitution, dropping and placement? Or does it apply more broadly?
4. How would we rule on these possible stroke-play situations?

a. A player marks the position of his ball at rest on the fringe, lifts and cleans the ball, and replaces it two inches behind and three inches to the left of the mark, still on the fringe, while he continues to consider how to play his chip. He then realizes that he has not correctly replaced the ball, lifts it again, and correctly places it on the original spot. This is a one-stroke penalty for moving a ball at rest not on the green where a lift is not allowed, but Rule 20-6 allows him to correct his failure to properly to replace the ball as required by Rule 18-2, right?

b. A player marks the position of his ball at rest on the putting green, lifts and cleans it, and replaces it two inches behind and three inches to the left of the mark while he considers how to play his putt. Forgetting that he has not properly replaced the ball, he putts the ball but does not hole it. He then realizes that he did not properly replace the ball and wants to invoke Rule 20-6, which he may not do since he has played the ball. Thus, he must complete the hole with the ball played from a wrong place with a two-stroke penalty. If he thinks that this is a serious breach, he must then also play a second ball from what would have been the correct place, complete the hole, add two penalty strokes to his score with the second ball and bring the attention of the issue to the Committee before signing his card, at which point the Committee would determine whether it was serious breach and thus which ball and score would count. Is all this correct?

c. A player marks the position of his ball at rest on the putting green, lifts and cleans it, and properly replaces it. But the player does not remove his mark.

While still considering how to play the putt and without having addressed it, the wind blows strongly, moving the ball to a slope, from which it rolls down and into the hole. The player acted within the Rules; the wind is not an outside agency, nor is gravity, and thus the ball is considered holed with no additional strokes, even though it had previously come to rest, been lifted, cleaned and replaced. The ball was in play when it was replaced. Is all this correct?

d. A player marks the position of his ball at rest on the putting green, lifts and cleans the ball, and replaces it two inches behind and three inches to the left of the mark while he considers how to play his putt. The wind blows strongly, moving the ball to a slope, where it rolls down and into a lateral hazard in which there is no standing water, so the player is able to retrieve his ball. He wants to invoke Rule 20-6 to erase the incorrect placement on the putting green and put the ball back at its original spot, rather than play it from the lateral hazard where the wind has moved it. I think that the player has not "played" the ball within the meaning of Rule 20-6, since he did not make a stroke at it while it was at the wrong spot on the putting green. The question is this. May he invoke Rule 20-6 and replace the ball where it should have been placed on the putting green, and putt without a penalty being imposed? Or is the ball in play that was wrongly placed on the putting green deemed to be "played" when it was moved by the wind from the putting green.

A. These are all very good questions and here are the answers.

1. When Rule 20-6 first came into its modern form in 1984, it stated "A ball dropped or placed in a wrong place or otherwise not in accordance with the Rules but not played may be lifted, without penalty, and the player shall then proceed correctly." In 1996, the additional words, "incorrectly substituted," appeared so one might conclude that the word "incorrectly" modifies just the word "substituted." However, since the original two actions specified in 1984, [1] dropped or [2] placed in a wrong place, were also incorrect actions, it might also be properly concluded that all three words - substituted, dropped, placed – should be considered as modified by the word incorrectly. With respect to the phrase, "in a wrong place", it modifies the compound phrase "dropped or placed," but not "substituted." Thus in summary, one should view the words, a ball [1] incorrectly substituted, [2] a ball incorrectly dropped in a wrong place or [3] a ball incorrectly placed in a wrong place, as simply three examples of incorrect procedures not in accordance with the Rules. These three specifically mentioned examples together with other situations where a ball is dropped or placed otherwise not in accordance with the Rules comprise the set of situations which may be corrected under Rule 20-6 if the ball has not been played.

2. As we have just noted, the expression “otherwise not in accordance with the Rules” applies only to the dropping or placing procedures. Thus, we have the examples of [1] dropping in a wrong place and [2] placing in a wrong place followed by the general phrase that takes in other violations of the Rules that might occur in dropping or placing such as dropping in an incorrect manner or placing being done by an unauthorized person both of which may be in a correct place. This construction is common throughout the Rules where the word "otherwise" is often used after some examples of incorrect procedure are specifically mentioned.
3. See 1 and 2 above.
4. For your possible situations:
 - a. You are correct.
 - b. You are correct. As Rule 20-6 so states, after the player has played from the wrong place, the Rule no longer applies and his opportunity for correction of a simple act of placing in a wrong place has passed. However, Rule 20-7 states that he incurs the penalty for playing from a wrong place [two strokes under the applicable Rule] and, if he believes he has committed a serious breach, must play a second ball as you have stated. Otherwise, he just keeps going with the ball played from the wrong place with the incurred penalty. For more on this, see Decision 20-7c/2 [Ball Putted from Wrong Place Lifted and Putted from Right Place].
 - c. You are correct. It's his lucky day - the ball is holed without penalty
 - d. He may correct the error of incorrect replacing by collecting his ball from the hazard under Rule 20-6 and placing it at the correct spot on the putting green. Within the context of the Rules, playing the ball means making a stroke at the ball.

Q. One other question about Rule 20-6.

Suppose in the possible situation "d" above, there had been deep water in the lateral hazard and the player as a result could not immediately retrieve his ball that was acted on by wind and gravity and came to rest in the lateral water hazard. Does his good luck depend on him being able to retrieve the actual ball that was not properly placed, since Rule 20-6 does not itself have a provision that authorizes the substitution like some of the other Rules do, as for instance Rule 18 or Rule 20-2c?

A. Rule 20-6 starts off with the words "a ball" because it applies to each and every ball that meets the criteria of the Rule, not just the original ball. Also, this Rule doesn't require lifting of the ball to proceed correctly but permits lifting if that is required to proceed correctly. For more details on this, see Decision 20-6/4 [Substituting Ball When Re-Dropping].

Although the words are not always present in each and every Rule that might result in the possibility of a ball not being recoverable through no fault of the player, it is a commonly accepted principle of the Rules that substitution of another ball without penalty is usually permissible in such cases where the ball is not immediately recoverable.

However, you should be aware of Decisions 15-2/1 [Player Substitutes Another Ball on Putting Green Because Original Ball Thrown to Caddie for Cleaning Came to Rest in Lake] and 18-2/13.5 [Ball Lifted and Thrown into Pond in Anger] where the player was careless to the extent that his ball was not immediately retrievable or purposefully caused a ball to be not retrievable. In these situations, the player is subject to penalty for improper substitution in order to complete the hole.

Q. Can you summarize what I should remember about putting a ball into play under a Rule that doesn't apply to my situation?

A. Here are three principles to remember.

(1). When a player intends to put a ball into play either by dropping or placing, and he does so, that ball is in play [see Decision 20-4/2]. This result stems from Rule 20-4 and the situation in the Decision is a good example of the application of the use of the words "player's intent." Also, it does not matter whether the ball dropped or placed is the player's original ball or another ball, that is, a substituted ball – the player's intent is paramount in deciding if the ball is in play.

(2). When a player intends to put a ball into play and does so, it is irrelevant whether the player is following an applicable Rule or an inapplicable Rule [see Decision 15/14]. In this Decision, a player thinks he is following Rule 28, drops a stray ball [substituted ball] instead of his original ball and plays it. He has put into play a substituted ball under an inapplicable Rule. By definition, the original ball is lost when he made a stroke at the substituted ball [see part e of the Definition of Lost Ball]. Before he played the dropped ball, which was in play, the original ball was simply out of play, but not lost as the original ball did not meet any of the conditions [the six parts] of the Definition of Lost Ball.

(3). When substituting a ball under an inapplicable Rule, if the player's actions were questioned before he made a stroke at the substituted ball, and thus he understood that he had proceeded under an inapplicable Rule in putting a ball into play, he could correct his mistake under Rule 20-6 by simply abandoning the substituted ball and proceeding correctly - see Decision 15/13 [Stray Ball Dropped Under Unplayable Ball Rule But Not Played]. In doing so, he is not required to lift the substituted ball. Rule 20-6 only requires that the player proceed correctly, which in this case means playing the original ball. Of course, if he does not find the original ball, proceeding correctly means following the lost ball Rule.

Q. Decision 20-7c/5 [Competitor Plays Second Ball Under Rule 20-7c; Clarification of "Penalty Strokes Incurred Solely by Playing the Ball Ruled Not to Count"] says that, although penalty strokes played with a second ball under Rule 20-7c may be disregarded if the second ball does not count, an exception exists for "a breach of the Rules which might apply to either ball," such a breach of Rule 7, Rule 8, or Rule 15. I know that Rule 3 and Rule 27 similarly provide that penalty strokes incurred in connection with a second ball or a provisional ball do not count if that ball is not the ball that counts.

I also recall Decision 15/7 [Wrong Ball Played in Belief It Is Provisional or Second Ball] saying that penalty strokes deriving from play of a wrong ball must count unless the ball that counts has already been holed. Would penalty strokes from a breach of Rule 7 or Rule 8 with the second ball under Rule 3-3 or the provisional ball under Rule 27-2 also count, even if the player does not end up scoring with the second ball under Rule 3-3 or the provisional ball under Rule 27-2?

A. The general answer to your question is mostly yes with respect to the breaches you cite when playing a second ball under Rules 3-3, 20-7c and 27-2 with the following qualifiers.

We should note that there are some very narrow situations where the penalty for advice should not apply to both balls but the guidance in Decision 20-7c/5 is good for a starting point. The key phrase is "might apply." Each case must be looked at and evaluated on its merits. However, all wrong ball and practice situations apply to both balls except in the case described in Decision 15/7.

From Decision 15/7, we learn about the situation where a player first holes out with one ball and then plays all strokes with the second ball after holing out with the first ball. In this latter case, none of the penalty strokes incurred with the second ball ever apply to the score with the first ball because the score with that ball is settled when it is holed.

Q. Here's a really difficult question that came to me today and I think that I know the answer but I want to hear your opinion. The question is:

In stroke play, a player hits his tee shot [Ball A] well left. He plays a provisional ball [Ball B], following the requirements of Rule 27-2 and it comes to rest in the fairway, most likely much closer to the hole than Ball A's resting place. As he walks to the area where Ball A should be, he sees a water hazard in the area. He finds a ball [Ball C], in the water hazard, incorrectly identifies it as his ball and takes it out of the hazard. He determines where this ball must have last crossed the margin of the hazard based on the flight of his tee shot and drops the ball on a spot that fulfills the requirements of Rule 26-1 had Ball C actually been his original ball. He plays Ball C onto the green, picks up his provisional ball and upon reaching the green discovers that Ball C is not his original ball.

What should be his course of action?

Here is what I think the answer should be.

It seems to me that, when the player picked up, dropped, and played Ball C, Ball A became a lost ball; and Ball C became a substituted ball, not improperly, as you can substitute for a lost ball dropped in a wrong place because he should have been taking a stroke and distance penalty for having lost Ball A. Thus, at that point, the player is on the green with two actual strokes and three penalty strokes, one under Rule 27, and two under Rule 20-7.

The player should hole out with Ball C and, because of the great potential here for a serious breach, play a second ball that corrects the error, report the situation to the Committee at the end of the round, and then and only then determine his correct score.

As to how and where the correction takes place, that is a very interesting question. Had no provisional ball been played, this would be easy. The player would go back to the tee with his proper stroke and distance penalty, adding the two penalty strokes for having played from a wrong place.

However, he played a provisional ball, and that is the ball that became the ball in play if Ball A was lost outside of a water hazard or out of bounds -- as the player originally thought. So the proper correction should be to go back and replace Ball B, accept an additional stroke penalty under Rule 18 for having improperly lifted it, replace it, and play onto the green.

So, it appears that, in the first scenario there are two strokes to the green, three penalty strokes, and the need to hole out. In scenario two, with correction, there are three

strokes to the green - tee shot, provisional shot, and shot to the green - four penalty shots - lost ball, wrong place, moving a ball at rest - and the need to hole out; and in scenario three, there are three shots to the green, six penalty shots from lost ball, wrong place, move ball at rest, improper substitution, and the need to hole out.

What did I get wrong?

A. You have a lot of good thoughts but some of them are incorrect.

The essence of this situation is in determining what Rule should be applied to the play of the substituted ball [Ball C]. When he dropped Ball C, it was of no consequence where it came from or whether he thought it was his original ball or not. By the Definition of Substituted Ball, Ball C was a substituted ball and in play according to Rule 20-4. So what Rule to apply to the play of Ball C? The answer must come from whether there was in fact virtual certainty that his original ball [Ball A] was in the water hazard. The player plays a part in this determination but above all it is a question of fact. We need a little more information to completely and properly answer the question. This information regarding virtual certainty would be readily available at the scene.

Taking this situation one step at a time, let's follow what happened. Based on what we know, the player properly played a provisional ball - he thought his ball might be lost outside of a water hazard. When he arrives at the location of his original ball, he discovers a water hazard. This does not cancel out the fact that he was OK in playing the provisional ball from the tee. However, he now must determine if there is virtual certainty that the original ball is in the water hazard in order to apply the water hazard Rule. The fact that he found a ball there in the water hazard, was certain that it was his original ball, picked it up and dropped it according to the water hazard Rule lends some credence to the fact that there was a reasonable possibility that the player believed his ball was in the water hazard. However, this alone is insufficient to establish virtual certainty. The Committee must delve into this further before making a ruling. Regardless of the finding about virtual certainty, the ball that he put into play by dropping outside the water hazard was a substituted ball. The only question about this substituted ball is for which ball it has been substituted – the original ball or the provisional ball.

That means that at present without additional information we have two possible answers:

1. If the Committee finds that there was virtual certainty, he was required to abandon the provisional ball [Rule 27-2c] and play a ball under the water hazard Rule, which he did. This means that the substituted ball was made for the original ball, which is permitted under the water hazard Rule. It makes no difference that he believed he was proceeding with the original ball. Thus, he

would only be subject to a one-stroke penalty under the water hazard Rule and he should continue play with the substituted ball that lies on the green. The fact that he subsequently discovered that Ball C was not his original ball and that his original ball lay elsewhere, possibly in the hazard or not, is irrelevant once he puts the substituted ball [Ball C] into play with virtual certainty concerning his original ball being lost in the water hazard.

2. If the Committee finds that there was not virtual certainty, then he was required to play the provisional ball [Rule 27-2b]. In this latter case, he was proceeding under an inapplicable Rule by dropping Ball C under the water hazard Rule procedures. When he dropped Ball C, he was wrongfully substituting it for the provisional ball [violation of Rule 15-2] and at a wrong place [violation of Rule 13-1]. Because the substituted ball was played, in stroke play, this results in a total of two penalty strokes [see Exception to 15-2], in addition to the one-stroke penalty under Rule 27-2 associated with play of the provisional ball. Furthermore, the Committee must now determine if the wrong place violation was a serious breach that requires correction [Rule 20-7c]. If a correction is required, he may substitute another ball when carrying out the correction procedure. Because we know that the location of the provisional ball was much closer to the hole than from where Ball C was played, it is unlikely that the Committee will determine that there was a serious breach of playing Ball C from a wrong place.

So, the question does not have a simple answer and you are correct about this being a difficult question.

Q. This stuff is humbling. I have three more thoughts.

1. I had thought of the virtual certainty question. I had answered it in my own mind that he did not, because he did not know that the water hazard was there, did not see it go in the water hazard, and had played a provisional ball that assumes that he did not think that the ball was in a water hazard, but rather was lost outside of a water hazard or out of bounds. I now see your point -- which I did not see before --that, upon arriving at the scene, he could have found that the only possible place the ball could be was in this water hazard if, for example, the water hazard was the only thing for miles. But I assume that, since he does not have any visual evidence or witness evidence of the ball being in a water hazard, the presumption is strongly against him on the virtual certainty issue.
2. If I understand your answer above, I made a mistake in not understanding that, having played a provisional ball, it became the ball in play for the original ball if the original ball was indeed lost. So, whereas I had indicated that there was no improper substitution when Ball C was dropped, there is indeed an improper

substitution, because the substitution is for Ball B, not Ball A. That makes complete sense now, in retrospect.

3. I also understand you to say that, when engaging in a correction under Rule 20-7, substitution is allowed. In other words, I did also err in saying that there should be a penalty for substituting Ball D for Ball B when going back to replace the provisional ball? I am now opening up my Rule book to answer this question for myself, but it does not directly answer this question. It says play a "second ball", but it does not include the language included elsewhere in the Rules that expressly states a substitution is allowed though I guess the concept of a "second ball" pretty strongly implies it.

A. When correcting a serious breach of playing from a wrong place [Rule 20-7c], substitution is permitted by virtue of the phrase "second ball." In some situations, the original ball may be 250 yards down the road and it would be unreasonable to expect the player to recover it. That is why the Rule says second ball. Yes, the Rules are very subtle some of the time.

Q. To summarize this, I have one more question:

Under the correct analysis, if there was not virtual certainty, then the player had his tee shot, his shot onto the green, and three penalty strokes -- a total of five strokes -- for the ball to get it onto the green. Since the improper substitution took Ball B out of play, then there is no penalty for moving a ball in play at rest, correct?

A. You have not accounted for the strokes correctly. In the case of no virtual certainty, we must count the stroke with the provisional ball.

Here is how we arrive at the total of the player's strokes, as his ball lies on the putting green, assuming that he lifted the provisional ball after he dropped and played the substituted ball.

1. Virtual certainty [which means that Ball C was correctly put into play]
 - a. 1 – stroke with original ball [provisional ball is abandoned]
 - b. 1 – stroke with the ball substituted under Rule 26-1 [played onto the green]
 - c. 1 – penalty stroke [Rule 26-1]
 - d. Total strokes to get the ball onto the green = 3
2. No virtual certainty [which means that the provisional ball was to become the ball in play] and no serious breach.

- a. 1 - stroke with original ball
- b. 1 - stroke with provisional ball
- c. 1 - stroke with substituted ball
- d. 1 - penalty stroke [Rule 27-2]
- e. 2 - penalty strokes [Rule 13-1 or Rule 20-7c Note 3 and Rule 15-2 with exception for wrong place]
- f. Total strokes to get the ball onto the green = 6

Q. On the scenario of no virtual certainty/no serious breach, you list a two-stroke penalty for a violation of Rule 13-1. I now understand the total penalty strokes; and I also understand how playing from a wrong place can constitute a failure to play the ball as it lies as required by Rule 13-1 when the substitution is made at a spot other than where the original ball lay and the ball is played. But I sense that I am missing something more fundamental in my understanding of this mosaic, with respect to the serious breach case correction under Rule 20-7c. Since it is important to get the foundation of the house in place correctly now, or I will forever have problems, do you mind explaining to me what is probably obvious that I am missing?

A. Although complex, the following will compare the application of Rule 20-7c in stroke play to the case we have been discussing for no virtual certainty that the original ball [Ball A] was in the water hazard. This means that the provisional ball [Ball B] played under Rule 27-2 became the ball in play; however, the player substituted a ball [Ball C] for the provisional ball at a wrong place and played it onto the green. We will start with an analysis of the situation of a non-serious breach of playing from a wrong place and follow with an analysis of a serious breach that must be corrected.

In play of the substituted ball [Ball C], there was a penalty that was incurred for a violation of Rule 13-1, which is for not playing the provisional ball as it lies according to that Rule but rather playing from somewhere else - a wrong place. This may be thought of as a violation of Rule 20-7, which it is. However, remember that Rule 20-7 tells us that "if a competitor makes a stroke from a wrong place, he incurs a penalty of two strokes under the applicable Rule," which is Rule 13-1 in this case. So, it is correct to say either [1] that he is in violation of Rule 13-1 or [2] that he is in violation of Rule 20-7. However, he is penalized under the applicable Rule, which is Rule 13-1.

If there were no serious breach of playing from a wrong place, the player is in violation of Rule 13-1 [not playing the ball as it lies or, said another way, playing from a wrong place] and Rule 15-2 [incorrect substitution] and he must continue play with the incorrectly substituted ball and appropriate penalties. We must remember that according to Note 3 to Rule 20-7c if a player incurs a penalty for making a stroke from a wrong place, there is no additional penalty for substituting when not permitted.

In the case of a serious breach of playing from a wrong place, the error must be corrected and Rule 20-7c tells us how. He must play a second ball dropped or placed in accordance with the Rules. In our case, he must return to the spot where the provisional ball lay and do exactly that.

If the Committee rules that the score with the second ball will count, the player will add two parts together to determine his score on the hole:

1. For Part I, he counts all the strokes [and penalty strokes] made at the original ball [Ball A] and provisional ball [Ball B] up to the point of playing from the wrong place. The stroke made at the substituted ball [Ball C] from the wrong place [including the penalties associated with that stroke] and all subsequent strokes and penalties incurred with the substituted ball played from the wrong place are not counted.
2. For Part II, he counts two penalty strokes per Rule 20-7c, the stroke made at the second ball played from the correct place and all subsequent strokes [and penalty strokes] made at the second ball.

In summary, in the non-serious breach case of playing from a wrong place, the penalty comes directly from the applicable Rule, which is Rule 13-1, and, in the serious breach case, the penalty comes directly from Rule 20-7c.

Rule 22

Q. Suppose a player asks an opponent or fellow-competitor to lift his ball to avoid interference. Suppose the opponent/fellow competitor declines to do so? What is the proper penalty: disqualification under Rule 3-4 for refusal to follow the Rules, or general penalty for violation of Rule 22? I now realize that I am confused, because on two practice exams I have taken, I think that the answer given was different, and I am not sure I know why. Help?

A. Although Rule 22 seems to be a simple Rule, sometimes a situation appears to be a simple application of Rule 22 but this is not the correct procedure to follow. The best Decisions to review to get the total picture about a player wanting to lift a ball under Rule 22 or a player's requests to lift a ball under Rule 22 are Decision 2/3 [Refusal to Comply with Rule in Match Play], Decision 2-4/8 [Player Concedes Opponent's Next Stroke And Plays Before Opponent Has Opportunity to Lift Ball], Decision 3-4/1 [Competitor Not Given Opportunity to Lift Ball Assisting Fellow-Competitor], Decision

22/6 [Competitor Requests That Ball In Position to Assist Him Not Be Lifted] and Decision 30-3f/11 [Request to Lift Ball That Might Assist Player Not Honored].

Above all, the form of play must be considered as the penalties for a violation are different and remember that Rule 3-4 applies only to stroke play.

Violations of Rule 22 that are the most common are for failure to replace a lifted ball before a stroke at it where the general penalty is applied.

Sometimes in a given situation Rule 1-3 and Rule 3-4 might come into play, as well as Rule 1-4. However, Rule 22 itself provides a disqualification penalty for agreement not to lift a ball in stroke play that might assist any competitor.

There are other variations as given in the above Decisions, which are good to know in order to get the correct answer, but here are three principles to remember, which also answer the questions that you raised:

1. In match play, if an opponent refuses to lift when asked under Rule 22, it is a situation judged in equity [Rule 1-4] and the penalty is loss of hole.
2. In stroke play, if a fellow-competitor refuses to lift when asked under Rule 22, it is a violation of Rule 3-4, for which the penalty is disqualification.
3. In stroke play, if there is an agreement not to lift a ball that might assist any competitor. The penalty is disqualification under Rule 22.

Q. I am so glad that I ran this to ground about Rule 22. I took one of the practice exams last night. This is my second time on that exam, but the last time was almost a month ago. I scored 49/50, completely closed book, and did the exam in an hour. The one question I missed involved this Rule and I was completely confused by the answer - since I thought disqualification was the penalty. But it was a match play question, and now I understand why I missed it -- which I won't ever again.

A. Here are a few words of advice. Don't be too hasty in saying "I won't ever again" miss a certain question, since we all have a propensity to do that very thing. It's like fingerprints that don't change or a swing flaw that is always there. Whenever a situation comes up that has caused trouble in the past, recognize it and remember to shift into a slow gear, with deep thought, in order not to repeat a mistake.

Rule 23

Q. Although I understand Decision 23/8 [Worm Partially Underground] states that a worm half in the ground/half out of the ground is a loose impediment, why is a worm ever a loose impediment rather than an outside agency? Indeed, Rule 19-1 implies that a worm is an outside agency insofar as it makes an exception to the Rule that deflection of a putt by an outside agency except a worm or insect requires cancellation of the putt and replay of the putt.

A. The Definition of Loose Impediments includes "worms." Note carefully that this doesn't say dead or alive, thus we properly conclude that all worms are loose impediments, provided they are not fixed or growing, solidly embedded or adhering to the ball. This fact is important if the ball and the worm lie in a hazard - see Rules 13-4 and 23-1.

Worms also fall into the class of objects defined as outside agencies in addition to being classified as loose impediments. In fact, as a practical matter, nearly all of the items that we see on a golf course are outside agencies according to the Definition of Outside Agency even though they fall into other categories such as obstructions and loose impediments. Many people think that the terms loose impediments and outside agencies are mutually exclusive - they aren't. The most cited case is that of the dead snake being a loose impediment and a live one being an outside agency. However, the dead snake is also an outside agency. See Decision 23/6.5 [Status of Snake].

Rules 24 and 25

Q. Decision 25-1b/2 [Diagrams Illustrating "Nearest Point of Relief"] is perfectly clear. It shows that, while the nearest point of relief for the players in these diagrams changed when they were left handed and right handed, the direction in which one went to find it did not change on these facts. Is that always the case, typically the case, or so dependent on facts and circumstances that you would not offer a generalization?

A. It is up to the player to decide on a reasonable course of action for him to take with respect to how he would play the ball as it lies for his next stroke if the obstruction or

abnormal ground condition were not there, which includes his selection of values for the four parameters of club, stance, swing and direction of play.

When he determines his nearest point of relief, he must use the same selection of values for the four parameters to demonstrate that the identified nearest point of relief is truly the nearest point of relief according to the Definition of the Nearest Point of Relief.

An assumption in the example in the Decision is that the player would play towards the hole as his selection of the direction parameter.

For more on how to properly determine the nearest point of relief, see Decision 24-2b/1 [Determining "Nearest Point of Relief"].

Q. There is a rope parallel to the fairway on the left of a hole running in the direction of play. The rope is about 12-inches off the ground. A player's ball comes to rest in a position on the left side of the rope where the player's swing grabs the rope. When the player determines his relief, can he stand on the left side, determine a nearest point that might be on the left side and then drop on the right side? I think that this case is similar to Decision 25-1b/15 [Measuring Across Ground Under Repair in Obtaining Relief].

A. Ropes on a golf course are a unique problem. Dealing with them requires time for an official to get the answer correct.

To begin, it must be determined if the rope is movable [may be moved without unreasonable effort, without unduly delaying play and without causing damage]. If the rope meets the definition of a movable obstruction, then the player is entitled to move the rope in order to obtain relief and Rule 24-2b is unavailable. Sometimes the Committee may declare the rope to be fixed and that is a consideration as well.

Note this passage in Decision 24-2b/1, "In determining the nearest point of relief accurately it is recommended that the player use the club, address position, direction of play and swing (right or left-handed) that he would have used had the obstruction or condition not been there."

This means that when determining the nearest point of relief [NPR], he must keep those four variables the same as he established to show that there was interference.

There is no restriction on which side of the rope [right or left] he must stand to determine the NPR. However, the NPR must be the absolute nearest point among any conceivable options that he may think he has. It is possible that he might be standing

on one side of the rope with the ball position on the other side but for a proper NPR, there must be no interference from the rope with a ball positioned at the NPR.

There is no restriction regarding measuring the club-length distance required by Rule 24-2b for dropping the ball – see Decision 20-2b/2 [Measuring Club-Lengths], “In measuring a distance of one club-length or two club-lengths when proceeding under a Rule, a player is entitled to measure directly across a ditch or through a fence, a tree or a constructed wall. However, a player may not measure through a natural undulation of the ground.”

Q. On the website, THOUGHTHEGREEN.ORG, under the category of Study Aids, there is a helpful list among which is a title called: Dropping on Putting Green Allowed. The list contains four circumstances -- one under Rule 24, one under Rule 25, one under Rule 26, and one under Rule 28. I have read the Rules and the Decisions looking for these four circumstances and I have not found them.

Also, Rule 20 seems to suggest that, not only can one not take relief from a hazard without penalty, but that one can neither take a drop and have the ball come to rest on a putting green or take a drop, as opposed to place, on a putting green. Obviously, I am missing something pretty important here. Can you help me understand?

A. The Study Aids to which you refer are really good stuff and a good starting point to memorize when studying the Rules – a foundation, if you will. But they must be read correctly. The list of four circumstances that you mentioned derives from those four Rules, which must be read very carefully to see if there are restrictions regarding dropping on a putting green. These circumstances are [1] relief outside the bunker when taking relief from the condition where the ball lies in a bunker in the case of Rule 24, [2] relief outside the bunker when taking relief from the condition where the ball lies in a bunker in the case of Rule 25, [3] relief from a lateral water hazard for Rule 26-1 and [4] ball unplayable through the green for Rule 28.

Thus, in following the procedures called for in each of these four Rules, if everything is otherwise in order, there is an acceptable possibility of dropping a ball on the putting green. We don't need Decisions to reach this conclusion.

Regarding Rule 20-2c, you will note that a dropped ball must be re-dropped if it meets one of the seven criteria. The first five listed criteria involve a ball that may have been dropped correctly but subsequently rolls into one of the specified criteria. For instance, the third criterion requires that the ball must be re-dropped if it "rolls onto and comes to rest on a putting green." This provision doesn't restrict dropping on the putting green in

the first place; it governs the situation where the ball rolls onto the putting green after a correct drop.

Q. Just to make sure that I understand your answer, examples would be:

1. A lateral water hazard runs up against a putting green on one side. Are you saying that, in taking relief from that lateral water hazard, the option of dropping two club-lengths from the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard, albeit not nearer to the hole, might in some circumstances allow a player to drop directly on the green? OK that makes sense. And your point about Rule 20-2c is that, if the two club-lengths only got us to the fringe, a ball that rolled less than an additional two club-lengths but onto the green would have to be re-dropped; I get it.
2. I can envision the same circumstance for an unplayable lie near the putting green as well. And your qualification on the sheet that the ball must lie outside of a bunker I also understand, since Rule 28 indicates that options b and c are available for an unplayable lie in the bunker only if the ball is dropped in the bunker. Correct?
3. I am not sure that I see examples of Relief From an Obstruction [Ball Lies in Bunker] or Relief From Abnormal Ground Condition [Ball Lies in Bunker]. Indeed, don't those two Rules require that relief for a ball in a bunker must be taken such that the ball must be dropped "on a part of the course in the bunker"? Or are you saying that, since those two Rules allow a ball to be dropped outside of the bunker under a one-stroke penalty, it would be possible to drop on a putting green -- if, for example, there was a bunker cut in the middle of the green?

Any elaboration you could provide on the Rule 24 and Rule 25 scenarios that you have in mind would be appreciated.

A. Answers.

1. OK.
2. OK.
3. As to the question you asked, "since those two Rules allow a ball to be dropped outside of the bunker under a one-stroke penalty, it would be possible to drop on a putting green -- if, for example, there was a bunker cut in the middle of the

green?" – the answer is yes. A practical example of this situation would be Hole #6 at Riviera Country Club, the "donut hole." Other examples are few and far between because this configuration is not common.

Q. I am having a little trouble with one aspect of the wording of Rules 24 and 25. The issue concerns when the player is required to drop or place and when this must be within one club-length or at the nearest point of relief.

It is pretty clear to me that, when the relief is being taken from an immovable obstruction or abnormal ground condition or a wrong putting green, through the green or on the teeing ground, the drop is always within one club-length of the nearest point of relief. It is also pretty clear to me that, when the relief is for a ball on the putting green, the placement is at the nearest point of relief, whether the nearest point of relief is on the putting green or not. Additionally, it is also clear to me that, when relief is from a movable obstruction, the drop or placement is at the spot where the ball lay on the obstruction as appropriate. But, when relief is taken under these two Rules for interference from an immovable obstruction or abnormal ground condition in a bunker, it is less clear to me whether the drop is at the spot of the nearest point of relief or within one club-length of that spot.

I think that the answer should be within one club-length of that spot, at least when relief is taken without penalty and the drop is in the bunker. Is that correct?

Also, when taking relief outside of the bunker, with one penalty stroke, from an immovable obstruction or an abnormal ground condition in the bunker, the Rules appear to speak of a spot on a specific line, and do not suggest that the ball may be dropped within one club-length of that line, although I assume that it can still roll up to two club-lengths from that spot. Am I reading that correctly?

I know that this is basic stuff, but every time I read these Rules I see little ambiguities and nuances that I did not see on all of my previous reads. Perhaps my eyes are just getting blood shot, so I am assuming that this is a normal part of the process of learning the Rules of Golf.

A. The answer to your question in paragraph three above is a conditional "yes." The answer to your question in paragraph four is an unconditional "yes."

The relief procedures prescribed in Rules 24 and 25 only diverge slightly and relief from interference when the ball lies in a bunker is one of those cases.

Under Rule 24, obstruction relief for a ball that lies in a bunker is identical to when it lies through the green - drop within one club-length of the nearest point of relief and the spot on which the ball is dropped must be in the bunker. If complete relief is not available

and the player elects to take relief, then the player must take relief outside the bunker under a one-stroke penalty - a very important point.

Under Rule 25, abnormal ground condition relief for a ball that lies in a bunker introduces the concept of maximum available relief – a concept not present in the case of obstruction relief. If complete relief is not available within one club-length of the nearest point of relief, or at the nearest point of relief, as the case may be, the player drops at the spot of maximum available relief within the bunker. This latter point might well be very close to where the ball lies with interference by the abnormal ground condition.

When taking relief outside the bunker for both Rules, under a one-stroke penalty, the player drops exactly on the line - not within one club-length of the line. Rule 20-2c applies to all drops - there are seven conditions for re-dropping.

Q. Decision 25-1b/25 [Ball Enters Burrowing Animal Hole in Bunker and Is Found Underneath Putting Green] surprised me. Usually, the Rules and Decisions have required direct vertical lines -- ball in a tree unplayable, ball in a burrowing animal hole, and so forth. This one appears to be out of the blue in requiring both horizontal and vertical action to identify the nearest point of relief. It is obviously doing so to avoid allowing a drop or placement on the putting green. Is this just arbitrary to achieve an "equitable" result, or is there a deeper theory involved with this one?

A. Although the nearest point of relief is generally measured vertically when the ball is not on the ground and horizontally when the ball is on the ground, both measurements being made in a practical matter, the correct procedure as clearly stated in the Rule is to directly measure at an angle if necessary and minimize the distance from where the ball lies to the nearest point of relief. This may be viewed as done with an imaginary string that has magical properties such as passing through solid objects. Not many appreciate the practical aspect of this fact although it directly follows from the Definition of Nearest Point of Relief, if carefully read.

However, there is the special case of a ball lying on an elevated part of an immovable obstruction and there is a special procedure for that case. If your ball lies on the bridge near the green of Hole #9 at the Congressional CC, site of the 2011 US Open, Decision 24-2b/11 [Ball Lying on Elevated Part of Immovable Obstruction] says the nearest point of relief is deemed to be at a point on the ground directly beneath where the ball lies on the obstruction. This is truly an exception to the Rules for a very practical reason and it actually happened during play at the 2011 US Open.



Suppose there were a tree branch in the air somewhere nearby the spot where the ball lies on the elevated obstruction. In some circumstances, it may be that a point on the tree branch would be one that meets the strictly applied meaning of the nearest point of relief. As a practical matter, the player might not be able to reach this point and would not be able to take relief. The Decision is written to allow for this possibility and directs a different procedure.

Another interesting situation at Congressional Country Club is that where a ball might lie inside one of the several tunnels with wing walls. Consider a ball on the concrete many feet from the entrance, horizontally measured, but only several feet measured on an angle to a spot on the grass next to the wall. That is where the magical string would come into play. The procedure given in the first part of Decision 24-2b/11 would not apply for this ball that lies inside a tunnel as opposed to a ball that lies on an elevated structure.

The correct relief procedure where a ball lies underground is succinctly covered in the last paragraph of Decision 24-2b/11 and requires the use of the previously mentioned imaginary string. The player in Decision 25-1b/25 [Ball Enters Burrowing Animal Hole in Bunker and Is Found Underneath Putting Green] would follow the same procedure.

Q. With regard to Decision 24-2b/12 [Ball in Drainpipe Under Course; Entrance to Drainpipe Is Out of Bounds], I am confused by part of this Decision: if the ball is found

in the obstruction, we estimate the spot above its resting place, presumably because that is the nearest point of relief, and drop within one club-length.

When the ball is not found and is deemed lost in the obstruction, we find the point where the ball last crossed the outermost limit of the obstruction and deem the ball to lie at that spot, which is here at the boundary line. As I read the Rule, on this lost ball in the obstruction, we then apply the basic obstruction Rule, which requires determining the nearest point of relief and then drop within one club-length.

But this Decision says that we just drop within one club-length of the point where the pipe coincides with boundary line. Why don't we have to determine nearest point of relief and then take the one club-length from that? Do we just presume on these facts that point where ball is deemed to lie and nearest point of relief are one and the same?

A. In both of these situations, ball found and ball not found, the assumption is made in the Decision that the drainpipe is of such a configuration that the nearest point of relief is physically as stated in the Decision.

If the ball is found in the obstruction, a player must use Rule 24-2 to determine the nearest point of relief before taking relief. If the ball is found in the obstruction near the entrance, then the nearest point of relief most probably is not physically "on the ground immediately above" the obstruction but outside the entrance.

If the ball is not found in the obstruction and there is virtual certainty that it is lost in the obstruction, the ball is deemed to lie where it last crossed the outermost limits of the obstruction and the nearest point of relief is determined based on that spot. The nearest point of relief must be strictly determined as nearest to where the ball lies or is deemed to lie.

Q. A question for you on Decision 25-1c/2.5 [Ball Dropped Under Rule 25-1c with Knowledge or Virtual Certainty That Ball Is in Casual Water; Original Ball Then Found]. In the second paragraph of the answer, the Decision suggests that the finding of the original ball which is now lost could affect the reference point for taking relief. I understand that in reference to a water hazard, where it may have been difficult from afar for us to determine where the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard. And I thus understand it, in theory, for casual water -- if that is what this means. But I just want to confirm that, since the player proceeded correctly under 25-1c, the Decision is not suggesting that the correct reference point for relief is where the original ball actually lay, but rather we are still focused on where it last crossed the margin of the casual water?

A. You are correct in that "the Decision is not suggesting that the correct reference point for relief is where the original ball actually lay."

This is a two-step process. First, there must be virtual certainty that the ball is lost in the casual water. Second, the player must determine the correct reference point for taking relief, which is different under the Rule applying to a ball that was found in casual water.

If the ball is subsequently found after a ball has been put into play, that doesn't affect the virtual certainty determination made in the first step. However, it might give new information about the correct reference point as determined in the second step. And if so, the player must correct his drop based on where he now determines the ball last crossed the outermost limits of the casual water.

Q. Where does the Committee get the authority for the Local Rule suggested in Decision 24/5 [Boundary Stakes Having No Significance in Play of Hole Being Played]? Such a Local Rule would make perfect sense. But the Definition does not appear to have the kind of proviso that would give the Committee the authority to override it, as the Rules do elsewhere.

A. Whenever a Decision says, "in equity or Rule 1-4 - - -," this generally means that we are dealing with a point not covered by the Rules. However, some of the time, this means that strictly applying Rules to a specific situation is not in the best interests of proper playing of the game and that the Rules should not be changed for a single uncommon situation, the so-called "one-off" situation.

In the case of Decision 24/5, it seems like a reasonable thing to allow relief from the stake in play of the other hole, despite the Definition, and the Decision allows for this possibility.

Q. Here is another abnormal ground conditions question and the proper way to take relief. Suppose a Committee adopts the Local Rule in Appendix I for relief from seams of cut turf.

When the player determines the nearest point of relief, where is the reference point for taking relief from interference by the seam? The area is widespread. There are many seams of cut turf. May the player determine the nearest point where he can avoid all the seams, or must he take relief only from the seam in which his ball lies? If he determines the nearest point that avoids the seam in which his ball lies, his ball might

roll and come to rest in another seam after the drop. Is he then required to take relief from the other seam?

A. This is a very practical situation as are the questions.

Let's first look at what the Local Rule says.

"Through the green, seams of cut turf (not the turf itself) are deemed to be ground under repair. However, interference by a seam with the player's stance is deemed not to be, of itself, interference under Rule 25-1. If the ball lies in or touches the seam or the seam interferes with the area of intended swing, relief is available under Rule 25-1. All seams within the cut turf area are considered the same seam."

The essence of this Local Rule is as summarized in the following five points.

- The LR tells us that the seam itself is deemed to be ground under repair and Rule 25-1 applies. The surrounding turf is not ground under repair.
- Interference occurs only when the ball lies in the seam or it lies so close to the seam that the seam interferes with the area of intended swing.
- All the seams are considered to be the same seam. This is similar to how we would consider an entire cart path to be the same cart path when following Rule 24-2.
- When we apply the Local Rule to a given situation, we follow Rule 25-1, which tells us that we determine the nearest point to where the ball lies that gives relief from interference and is not nearer the hole. This means we find a nearest spot where, if a ball were positioned there, the ball (i) does not lie in a seam or (ii) does not have interference with the area of intended swing. Next, we drop the ball within one club-length of that nearest spot and on a spot where the ball does not strike the ground in a seam after the drop.
- If the ball strikes the ground outside of a seam but rolls and comes to rest in a seam, then Rule 20-2c tells us that we must re-drop the ball.

Based on these five points, here are the answers to your three questions.

- When he determines the nearest point of relief, where is the reference point for taking relief from interference by the seam? See bullet point #4 above.
- May the player determine the nearest point that he can avoid all the seams, or only the seam in which his ball lies? See bullet point #3 above. All seams are considered to be the same seam, so the nearest point he determines must avoid all the seams.
- If his ball rolls and comes to rest in another seam after the drop, how does he proceed? See bullet point #5 above. He is required to re-drop the ball the same

as if a ball rolls back onto a cart path when taking relief from the cart path. He still has interference and is in a re-drop situation.

Q. There are trees that have the base covered with wood chips. Is a player entitled to relief from those chips? Which rule is applied - Rule 24-2 or 25-1?

A. Wood chips have been a special problem for Rules officials for many years. Indeed, there is a separate heading in the Index of the Decisions book for wood and wood chips [four Decisions listed] and the USGA has clarified wood chips in its Local Rules for USGA Championships as “Wood Chips and Mulch — are loose impediments, unless otherwise provided for in the Notice to Players.”

The use of wood chips to cover the base of a tree is usually for the purpose of providing a simple visual treatment [some think that it looks nice] that also prevents weeds and grass from growing close to the tree, thus, with the wood chips in place, periodic course maintenance is somewhat reduced.

Whenever the USGA Local Rule is in effect, the wood chips surrounding a tree are considered as loose impediments covered by Rule 23-1 not Rules 24 or 25.

However, if wood chips are used in the construction of a road or path, providing an artificial-surface similar to gravel, the wood chip surface becomes an obstruction. Relief is then available under Rule 24. If the player prefers to play a ball lying on a wood chip path, he may remove some of the wood chips because they have not lost their status as loose impediments – see Decision 23/14.

In a competition on a course where wood chips are used for whatever purpose, it is important for the Committee to clarify the status of each of the uses as either loose impediments or an obstruction or perhaps both in the case of an artificial-surface.

Rule 26

Q. I have three questions about Decision 26-1/9 [Caddie Lifts Ball in Water Hazard Without Player's Authority] where the caddie lifts the player's ball in a water hazard without the player's authority:

1. Is this Decision another one that turns on intent? It seems that the player could have directed his caddie to lift the ball, since a lift may be done by a player, partner, or authorized person, and invoked Rule 26-1 with only a single stroke penalty imposed. Yet, in this Decision, where the caddie lifts without authorization, and the player had not indicated whether he would play it as it lies or not, the player is penalized under both Rule 18 and Rule 26.
2. Now, if the player directed the caddie to lift, and the player dropped under 26-1c when the hazard was not marked as a lateral water hazard, the player could use Rule 20-6 to correct the wrong place drop but, since he was proceeding under an applicable Rule, that is, Rule 26-1, he could only use the other options available under Rule 26, right? He could not avail himself of another Rule, could he?
3. Consider this example. The player directed the caddie to lift a ball in the water hazard, and the player dropped at the nearest point of relief, because for example the ball was on an immovable obstruction in the water hazard, the player could use Rule 20-6 to correct the wrong place drop and, since he had been proceeding under an inapplicable Rule, as Rule 24 does not provide relief from immovable obstructions in water hazards, he could in fact now switch to a different Rule from which he sought to obtain relief, correct?

A. This is an interesting set of three situations and not too farfetched at all. Here are the answers:

1. In general, a caddie may not lift the player's ball without specific authority under Rule 18-2, however there are exceptions. Decision 26-1/9 illustrates one of these exceptions. If there was no doubt or it was reasonable to assume from the player's actions or statements that he would make his next stroke from outside the hazard, there is no penalty under Rule 18-2 for the caddie's lifting of the ball. In the absence of these circumstances, the player incurs the penalty under Rule 18-2. Another exception would be where the ball lies in deep water and it was not possible to make a stroke at the ball. Decision 26-1/9 is all about illustrating these aspects. See also Decisions 18-2/14 [Caddie on Own Initiative Lifts Ball for Identification] and 18-2/15 [Caddie on Own Initiative Lifts Ball Considering It Unplayable]. If the caddie had been granted authority by the player, then there would be no penalty under Rule 18-2 and the player may proceed under Rule 26-1 with a one-stroke penalty as required by that Rule. If the caddie does lift the ball without this specific authority or without the reasonable assumption as stated above, then there is a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2. The ball must be replaced, also as directed by Rule 18-2, or the player may directly take relief under Rule 26-1 for an additional one-stroke penalty without replacing the ball.

In any case, if the player decides to take relief under Rule 26-1, he may do so but that would not negate the penalty already incurred under Rule 18-2 if applicable. A similar situation of avoiding a penalty is in Decision 13-4/40 [Player Cleans Clubhead in Water Hazard When Ball Lies in Hazard] where a player's ball lies in deep water and it is clearly unreasonable for him to play a stroke.

2. You are correct. The player may correct the wrong place error under Rule 20-6 but not change to another Rule since the drop was made under an applicable Rule 26-1. The key point is that the ball was put into play under an applicable Rule and he must follow that Rule until he gets it in the right place with respect to that Rule and any of its possible options.
3. If the player attempts to follow the procedures of Rule 24-2b when his ball lies in a water hazard by dropping a ball at some place, he may use Rule 20-6 to correct the error of dropping under an inapplicable Rule. He then has two choices to make this correction. He may replace the ball with a one-stroke penalty under Rule 18-2 or he may take relief under Rule 26-1 with the penalty stroke called for by that Rule. There is no other Rule applicable to a ball that lies in a water hazard under which he is entitled to relief.

Q. I am confused by the answer to Decision 1-4/7 [Ball Lost in Either Water Hazard or Casual Water Overflowing Hazard] regarding a ball lost either in a water hazard or in casual water. It is known or virtually certain that a ball is lost, but the player does not know whether it is lost in the water hazard or lost on the course, that is, there is casual water overflowing from the hazard. Why isn't this a situation in which the player has to treat the ball as lost, not subject to Rule 26, because he does not have sufficient evidence that it was actually lost in the water hazard?

A. You are correct in that the player doesn't have sufficient evidence to use the ball lost in a water hazard Rule. We could also observe that he doesn't have sufficient evidence to use the ball lost in casual water Rule.

This is a situation where the ball is lost and the Committee could just let the Rules be applied as they are written. This would mean that since the player doesn't know or have virtual certainty that the ball is in [1] the casual water or [2] the water hazard, taken individually in turn, he would not be permitted to use Rules 25-1c or 26-1, respectively. Thus, he would be required to proceed under Rule 27-1c.

However, it would be inequitable to require the player to return to the spot of the previous stroke under penalty of stroke and distance when he does know with certainty

that the ball is in either one condition or the other condition. So, the Decision is written, using equity [Rule 1-4], allowing the player to proceed following the Rule that is the less generous of the two possibilities - the water hazard Rule with a one-stroke penalty - rather than the free relief option of the ball lost in casual water Rule. In any case, the player is better off than if he was required to follow Rule 27-1c, a loss of stroke and distance.

Q. In reviewing Decision 20-7/2 [Ball Deemed Unplayable in Water Hazard Is Dropped in Hazard and Played] regarding the player who took relief inside a water hazard, using unplayable ball Rule procedures. I question why the player gets both a one-stroke penalty under Rule 26 and a two-stroke penalty for playing from the wrong place. The player proceeded under Rule 28, albeit incorrectly. But he did not drop "outside" of -- or, perhaps more importantly, "behind" -- the water hazard as required by Rule 26. Rather, what he did was improperly move his ball in play while at rest and failed to replace it. He merely moved it from one spot in the water hazard to another.

Since the player did not take any of the forms of relief authorized under Rule 26, why penalize him under Rule 26? Why not just penalize him for incorrectly proceeding under Rule 28? Or, more specifically, why not just penalize him for violating Rule 18 and for failing to replace -- so he gets the general penalty?

In other words, in this circumstance, why isn't it better to penalize two strokes rather than three?

A. Look to Decision 34-3/6 [Player Proceeds Under an Inapplicable Rule; Committee's Decision] for guidance as to what the Committee should do when a player proceeds under an inapplicable Rule and makes a stroke, as for instance, in your particular situation of a player trying to use the unplayable ball Rule when his ball lies in a water hazard.

As the only Rule that allowed the player to lift his ball for relief when it lies in a water hazard is Rule 26, the Committee appropriately applied Rule 26 with the relevant one-stroke penalty. Since he played from a spot not permitted by Rule 26, he also incurs a two-stroke penalty for playing from a wrong place.

You will note from the Decision that the Committee has determined that Rule 18 should only be applied if there is no other applicable Rule available to the player.

In this case, the resulting number of penalty strokes incurred by the player is not relevant to the assignment of an applicable Rule by the Committee.

Q. If a player makes a stroke from a water hazard at point X and the ball comes to rest at point Y in a subsequent water hazard, as opposed to the same hazard, which hazard serves as the reference for taking relief in the following situations:

1. If the player does not choose to drop a ball at the spot of the last stroke, point X, in the first hazard? The answer seems to be to use the margin of the subsequent hazard.
2. If the player drops a ball at the spot of the last stroke, point X, but then elects not to play the ball but rather to take relief under Rule 26-2a(i)(a)? The Rule seems to suggest that we use as reference the margin of the hazard in which the ball was dropped, and not the margin of the subsequent hazard.

All of this makes sense to me, but Decision 26-2/2 [Ball Played from Within Hazard Comes to Rest in Same Hazard After Exiting Hazard] uses only a single hazard not multiple hazards. I want to make sure that I understand the multiple hazard situations.

A. The reference point for taking relief in the case of multiple water hazards depends on where the ball lies.

In the case of a player playing a ball from one water hazard into another water hazard, the intent of Rule 26-2 is to give the player relief from the second water hazard in a parallel way to the basic principles of Rule 26-1 for relief from a single water hazard. The Rule also intends that the player should be able to take relief for a ball that is unplayable as a result of dropping into a water hazard at the spot of the previous stroke.

For example, excluding lateral water hazards, this means we will draw the two principles from Rule 26-1 which apply to a single hazard, that is, the two ways that a player can obtain relief from a water hazard [1] play from the spot of the previous stroke, regardless of where that might be, or [2] drop outside the hazard, keeping the point where the original ball last crossed [this means entering not exiting] the margin of the hazard before coming to rest in the hazard between the spot on which the ball is dropped and the hole.

Thus, Rule 26-2 requires that we determine reference points for relief. To decide on where these various reference points are for the purposes of taking relief when two hazards are involved, one must agree on where the ball lies at the exact moment of taking relief [first hazard or second hazard]. In the case of two water hazards, there are two possible sets of reference points [with respect to the first and second water hazards] and the set that one uses is driven by where the ball lies.

When multiple water hazards are involved, say in playing a ball that lay at point X from a first hazard into a second hazard where it comes to rest at point Y, the first option for

the player is that he may drop a ball at point X, the spot of the last stroke, which would be in the first hazard.

If he drops a ball at point X in the first water hazard and decides not to play it, he may take relief from that hazard, the first water hazard, using as a reference point the point where his original ball last crossed the margin of that hazard before it came to rest in that hazard, which is before he played the original ball from point X to point Y.

If he chooses a relief option other than dropping a ball at point X, then the reference point for taking relief is the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the second hazard before coming to rest at point Y.

Q. Just to clarify what you have just said, consider Decision 26-2/2 [Ball Played from Within Hazard Comes to Rest in Same Hazard after Exiting Hazard], which points out that point E is the reference point for proceeding under Rule 26-1b or 26-1c. I understand. But suppose that, rather than this being a single body of water, there was a strip of land going east-west that lies north of point B and south of point D. So when the player plays a stroke from point B to point D, point E is the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the "north" hazard before coming to rest in the north hazard, but is not the point where the ball last crossed the margin of the south hazard before coming to rest in the south hazard. That point would be point C. My questions are:

1. If the player hit from point B to point D and dropped a substituted ball at point B in the south hazard under Rule 26-2a(i), and then decided not to play the shot from point B, would the player use point C as the reference point for relief under 26-2a(i)(a)?
2. If the player had not first dropped at point B after the shot that came to rest at point D, but instead took relief under 26-2a(ii), would he use point E as the reference point for relief?

A. These are very good questions with a straightforward analysis. Here are the answers:

1. Yes. The interesting aspect here is that the reference point C, for relief from the first hazard, is still available even though he played from this hazard into the second hazard; that is, it never goes away if he should wish to drop a ball in the first hazard and subsequently not want to play that ball. Because he dropped the ball into the first hazard under Rule 26-2a(i), his ball now lies in the first hazard and the reference point for relief is point C.

2. Yes. Since his ball lies in the second hazard, the reference point for relief is point E, where his ball last crossed the margin of the second hazard before it came to rest in the second hazard.

However, it's important to remember that in the single body of water case given in Decision 26-2/2, without the two hazard situation that you describe, point C disappears as a relief reference point once his ball re-enters the hazard at point E.

Rule 27

Q. Solution 1 in Decision 27/11 [Provisional Ball Not Distinguishable from Original Ball] says that the ball that the player found must be "presumed" to be the provisional ball or that the player should "abandon" the other ball. Does that mean that the other ball that was not found becomes a lost ball and that the player lies three with the provisional ball to be played?

A. Yes.

This is an equity [Rule 1-4] Decision and the discussion is meant to convey the thought process behind the ruling and the reasoning to use equity. The player is not permitted to say that the one ball that he found is the original ball since he can't either identify it or distinguish between the two balls. So we are left with equity for a ruling as it would be really unfair to say that both are lost since he actually found one of them for sure. We cut the player a break by saying that he may play the found ball as his provisional ball with his 4th stroke and that the original ball is lost.

These situations and their solutions as given by the Decision prove the benefit of a player putting an identifying mark on his ball.

Q. Decision 27/1.5 [Time Permitted to Search for Lost Ball If Play Suspended during Search] is somewhat counterintuitive to me. If the Committee has suspended play because of dangerous weather, for example, do we really want to tell players that, if they want to avoid a lost ball penalty, they must continue their five minute search now, rather than immediately seek safe shelter? Why not just toll the clock and give the player the remaining search time upon the resumption of play? Is it because nature and outside agencies could intervene and move the ball during the suspension?

A. You have not interpreted the Decision correctly.

If he discontinues play, he may continue to search during the suspension. However, the search clock keeps running while he is searching.

If he discontinues play, he may stop searching during the suspension. In this case where he does not search during his discontinuance, the search clock is stopped at the time when play was discontinued.

The total time for search is always only for a total of five minutes. There is no "free" search during discontinuance.

Q. There is a situation where the player's original ball lay within a water hazard. He played the original ball from the water hazard, believed the ball may be out of bounds or lost outside a water hazard and stated his intent to play a provisional ball. When he dropped the provisional ball in the water hazard, it rolled into an unplayable position in the water hazard. What are the player's options?

A. In such a situation, where the original ball has been played from a water hazard and is lost or out of bounds, the applicable Rule is Rule 26-2b. Rule 26-2b says the player must take a penalty stroke under Rule 27-1 but in such a situation the player may always proceed under Rule 27-2 rather than directly under Rule 27-1.

When the ball dropped under Rule 27-2 [provisional ball] was properly dropped, lands where required in the water hazard and rolls into a location where it is not playable, no re-drop is required. At this point, he has only incurred the "provisional penalty" for play of the provisional ball under Rule 27-2.

However, it seems to me that the answer for what he should do next is simple. The player has properly put into play a provisional ball - so far so good. Since the provisional ball lies in the water hazard where it is unplayable, Note 1 to Rule 26-2b is applicable.

Following the Note, if he plays a ball under Rule 26-2b, this ball must be considered a ball substituted for the provisional ball under an applicable Rule, that is, a proper continuation of play of the provisional ball. The player has incurred two penalty strokes [Rule 27-2 and Rule 26-2b] both of which are "provisional" depending on the status of the original ball.

If he finds the original ball struck from the water hazard, he must play it and abandon the provisional ball - no penalty strokes incurred.

If the original ball is lost, the provisional ball becomes the ball in play with a penalty stroke under Rule 27-2 and a penalty stroke under Rule 26-2b.

Rule 28

Q. In Decision 28/15 [Stray Ball Deemed Unplayable, Dropped Within Two Club-Lengths and Played Before Error Discovered], it equivocates on whether playing the substituted ball would be a serious breach of the Rules.

My questions are:

1. I suppose we need more facts to be sure, but it almost always would be, wouldn't it?
2. And the necessary correction is going back to the spot from which the stroke was made with the original ball that the player could not initially find, isn't it?
3. That was the ball that became lost when the stray ball was substituted and put in play, right?
4. And Rules 27-1 and 20-5 dictate the spot at which a drop or place must take place, right?

A. Here are the answers:

1. Yes. A case where it wouldn't be a serious breach is where he chunked it within bad country from one spot to another close to the original spot or something like that.
2. Yes. In other words, he must proceed under Rule 27-1c, the applicable Rule for a case where the location of the original ball is unknown.
3. The answer to your third question requires a restatement of the question as embedded in the question is a misstatement. The original ball was not lost when the stray ball was substituted by dropping it. The original ball became lost when a stroke was made with the substituted ball - there is a big difference between substituting a ball by dropping it and the act of playing it by making a stroke at it, as you will see in Decision 15/13.
4. Yes.

Q. If a player took unplayable ball relief with penalty for a ball that lies within ground under repair, and it remained in the ground under repair after the drop, is the player now foreclosed from proceeding with relief under Rule 25 from the new point in the ground under repair where the ball now lies?

A. No, if a player's ball lies in ground under repair, he is entitled to relief under Rule 25, regardless of how it got there.

In another situation, if a player's ball lies through the green and he drops a ball into a water hazard when following the unplayable ball Rule, he has a different problem than your player in that the point where the ball last crossed the margin doesn't exist. Thus, he is restricted to Rule 26-1a in taking relief from the water hazard.

Your player has no such restriction and his reference point for relief is where his ball lies in the ground under repair.

Rule 32

Q. I am trying to fill in my knowledge on some minor things that probably don't affect real Rules officials. Today's basic is: What exactly are "bogey" or "par" competitions? I know what a Stableford competition is, but I do not know what a "bogey" or "par" competition is, and frankly Rule 32 is not helping me much. Can you explain these strange forms of play for me?

A. Both of these are competitions that are played by stroke play Rules and the special Rules governing these competitions as set forth within Rule 32, with general stroke play penalties as called for in the other applicable Rules. What makes the special Rules very strange is that we keep score by match play methods, that is, hole-by-hole, rather than comparing total strokes at the end of the round as in ordinary stroke play. The competition may be between two individuals or among a large number of individuals since all players play by stroke play Rules.

Played by stroke play Rules means that, for instance, Rule 2 doesn't apply but Rule 3 does apply, as does Rule 6-6, the score card Rule.

Scoring and deciding the winner is actually quite simple. For each hole, the score card is marked with the total number of strokes on that hole, including penalty strokes, accumulated by the individual. Yes, there is a score card since this is stroke play but

there will be no total score for the round. Thus, in case of severe distress, the player may pick up and have no score for the hole. The marker is responsible for marking only the gross number of strokes where the competitor makes a net score equal to or less than the fixed target score as described below.

For a par competition, the individual's score on the hole is compared with the course par for the hole just played as though his opponent scored par. If his score is over par, then the hole is marked as a loss. If his score is under par, it is marked as a win. A player's score of par results in a halved hole.

A bogey competition is similar to a par competition except that the score for comparison is not par. For a bogey competition, some number of fixed strokes, often a slightly relaxed version of par [e.g., a 440 yard hole may be a bogey 5], is set for the score to be compared with on a particular hole and is called the bogey. It may be one over par but not necessarily so. If his score for a hole is lower than the bogey score, he is said to have won the hole, similar to match play where the opponent scores the bogey score. If his score for a hole is equal to the bogey score, then the hole is said to be halved. If his score for a hole is more than the bogey score, he is said to have lost that hole.

At the end of the stipulated round, usually 18 holes, the Committee adds the wins and subtracts the losses. The player then has the result of his round - as for example, one up or two down, similar to match play. The Committee then compares his result with that of the others in the competition to determine the overall winner, who will be the one with the largest number of net holes won.

Some golf historians have speculated that a form of this type of competition might have been the one used by the Gentlemen Golfers at Edinburgh in the spring of 1744, for which the original thirteen Rules of Golf were written.

The attractive aspect of this method of keeping score is that a large number of individuals may play and a single bad hole doesn't affect the overall result as much as it would in stroke play, yet all play under the same Rules, that is, stroke play Rules with no concessions, Rule 2-4, recalled strokes and other oddities of match play. The other appeal is that it allows a large number of players to play an individual competition with a decent pace of play, as players don't need to hole out once they have reached the stage of losing the hole.

Rule 34

Q. What does a referee do when this happens?

During a competition, two fellow-competitors complained that a player purposely moved his ball in play. However, the player insisted that he didn't do that.

How do we resolve this situation?

A. You have posed the most difficult situation that an official must address - the resolution of a question of fact, especially a disagreement among players as to what the facts are.

The last Decision in the book covers this subject - Decision 34-3/9 [Resolution of Questions of Fact]. In this Decision, there are references to many of the situations also in the book concerning resolution of questions of fact.

In the final analysis, the official must balance the known facts, if any, with the opinions of the other players. There is no hard and fast Rule to follow in getting to the proper answer. Sometimes the doubt is resolved in favor of a player and in other situations, the doubt is resolved against the player.

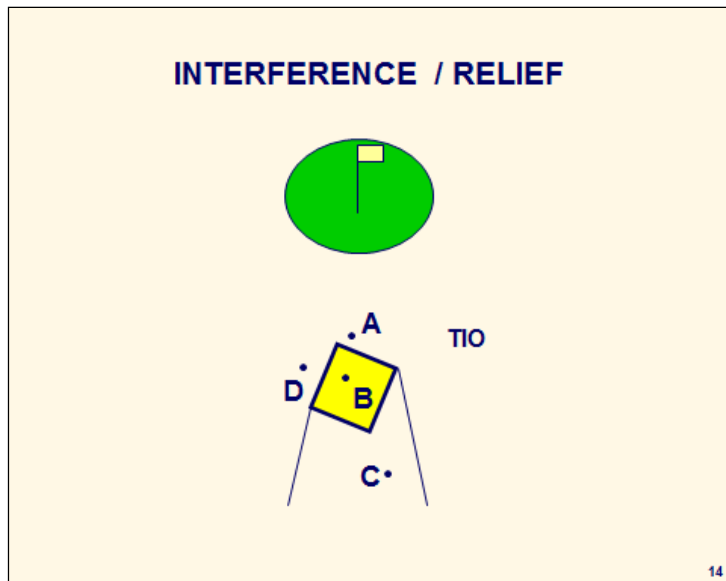
Unfortunately, sometimes we encounter a player who is dishonest and we must make a determination that the player is not telling the truth about something that it is known to have happened. That is a terrible situation but an official must be wise and rule accordingly. Most of these situations must be resolved by the Committee as whole rather than the responsibility falling on an individual referee.

Fortunately, these situations do not happen frequently but a careful study of Decision 34-3/9 will give a solid starting point.

Temporary Immovable Obstructions

Q. In the Rules book in Appendix I, there is a suggested Rule for temporary immovable obstructions (TIO). Can you explain what is meant in Note 3 about taking relief on the opposite side? Which is more important – line of play or direct line to the hole?

A. Take a look at this simplified TIO drawing for reference.



The TIO is shown in yellow and there are four positions with potential interference from the TIO for a ball that lies at that point based on the definition of interference.

The other side of the TIO

Note 3 to the TIO Rule in Appendix I of the Rules of Golf states that a “Committee may make a Local Rule (a) permitting or requiring a player to use a dropping zone when taking relief from a TIO or (b) permitting a player, as an additional relief option, to drop the ball on the opposite side of the TIO from the point established under Clause III, but otherwise in accordance with Clause III.”

If you look at the drawing for a ball at point C, the player is entitled to relief because he has intervention from the TIO and the nearest point of relief is to the right of point C outside the intervention line. However, suppose a large group of bushes is adjacent to the TIO just to the right of point C such that the nearest point of relief from the TIO was inside this group of bushes. In effect, the player would receive no relief because the ball after relief was taken would be unplayable. For this reason, the Committee is permitted to allow the player to take relief to the left of point C [“the other side of the

TIO”] outside the intervention line at the left using the same procedures as would be used for a “true” nearest point of relief to the right of point C.

Line of play and direct line to the hole

The entire basis of granting relief under the TIO Rule is that a player has intervention that is defined for the purposes of the Rule as “intervention exists when a part of the TIO lies on a straight line drawn from the position of the ball [for example point C] to the hole.” The player’s line of play is not a part of this determination of whether intervention exists. However, the TIO Rule follows this up by stating that a player will not be granted relief unless the TIO is on his line of play.

So in answer to your question about which is the most important – both conditions must be met for the player to be entitled to relief under the TIO Rule.

For your information, here is a summary of the essential points of the USGA TIO Rule:

There are two ways that a player may have interference from a TIO: (a) physical interference - the TIO physically interferes with the player's stance or area of intended swing [potentially at points A, B and D in the above diagram] or (b) intervention - the TIO is on a direct line between the player's ball and the hole [point C in the above diagram] and is on his line of play or if the ball lies within one club-length, measured on the equidistant arc [all the points that are the same distance from the hole as the ball], of a spot that has intervention [potentially point D in the above diagram].

- Relief for a ball in front of a TIO with physical interference and with no intervention. Determine the nearest point of relief the same as taking relief from an ordinary immovable obstruction [Rule 24-2b]. Lift the ball and drop it within one club-length of the NPR not nearer the hole and where there is no physical interference or intervention.
- Relief for a ball (i) with intervention only, or (ii) near a TIO with both physical interference and intervention. Move along the equidistant arc until there is a spot where there is no physical interference and no intervention. Lift the ball and drop it within one club-length of this spot not nearer the hole and where there is no physical interference or intervention.

Exception for the U.S. Open, the U.S. Women's Open, and the U.S. Senior Open only: For a ball that lies in, on or under a TIO near the putting green of the hole being played or where the player has physical interference from such a TIO, the nearest dropping zone must be used.

General

Q. Any comments on how to prepare for and take a Rules exam?

A. This answer assumes that you have registered for one of the national PGA-USGA Rules of Golf Workshops. You will find that the instruction there is well organized and that the sessions are taught by recognized experts on the Rules of Golf. The associated study materials contain numerous suggestions on how best to learn more about the Rules of Golf. What follows here is focused on how to obtain your best score on the Workshop exam.

This answer also assumes that you are serious in your study of the Rules of Golf and are willing to put in the time necessary to reach a high level of proficiency. If this is not your goal, then some of the recommended items might be considered as optional. It will take hard work over a long period of time to become truly proficient but the level of proficiency you will attain is directly proportional to the amount of effort put into your study.

There is no substitute for periodic study over a long period of time with repetition being the essence to remembering the vast quantities of material in the Rules and Decisions. There is also no substitute for the process of working as many practice exams as possible to acclimate to the test taking environment and reinforce learned principles. However, you should keep in mind that old practice exams may involve situations where there have been changes to the Rules and/or Decisions, thereby possibly leading to a different answer today than when the practice exam was written.

The 51 Definitions in the Rules booklet must be memorized as they are the foundation to the Rules themselves. The Decisions book should be reviewed once in its entirety spaced over a period of a month and then the task should begin again. This means reviewing one set of Decisions representing a single Rule [one of 34] each day for a month with a little extra work at the end of a month [for a 30 day month] to complete all 34 Rules.

In taking the exam, first, open the exam book and just look it over for a minute, as it will look less formidable than expected when you see some things that you easily know. This helps with confidence. If you immediately start with the first question, which is a tough one that takes forever, that is not a good way to kick it off. It also helps not to start in a panic, thinking that there is not enough time when there really is if you are well-prepared and organize the exam taking itself.

The questions are all multiple choice and fall into three groups by type, which are [1] pick which of the following are True/False [T/F] or sometimes Correct/Not Correct, [2] situations where it is required to find the penalty strokes incurred and strokes taken and [3] others which are generally about what would be a proper ruling. Always answer all similar type questions together at the same time. The reason for answering the similar questions at once is that doing this will get the mind into a particular mode and the mind likes to stay there for efficiency and accuracy, not constantly changing gears. Bouncing back and forth between types of questions will always lead to silly mistakes.

Start the actual exam taking by only answering the questions from the first group, that is, the T/F types first. Don't answer any of the others until finishing the T/F types of which there will be about a dozen. They are the easiest, will give you confidence and take less time to complete. Treat each choice [A, B, C, or D] as a T/F question standing on its own merits. When a sequence of A, B, C, D is completed, you will have hopefully selected three of one type and one of the other type. If so, there is near certainty that you have it right. Check to be sure the selected answer is appropriate to the question, mark the answer sheet and never come back to this question for any reason except to be sure that the correct question number is marked with the correct answer. If you find that you have two of each [T, T, F, F], see if that can be quickly resolved. If not, skip this one and come back at the end of the exam - mark the question with a distinctive symbol [a star or a big circle]. No guessing at this time. That should be done later. Only answer the ones that you are certain of the answer.

Next, go in sequence through the remaining questions.

However, when you come to a question that asks how many penalty strokes or what is the player's score, circle it and come back later, as they are the toughest and must be done at the end of the exam with the same methodology for each situation. They are also the easiest on which to make a math mistake and must be done very carefully with sketches of the situation and audits for accuracy. Make sure to never forget to include the penalty stroke for lost ball [Rule 27-1c] or relief from a water hazard [Rule 26-1]. Don't count the first stroke and subsequent strokes made at a wrong ball or a provisional ball that is abandoned [Rule 27-2c]. Carefully distinguish between a substituted ball [Rule 15-2] and a wrong ball [Rule 15-3]. When reading the sentence, underline the part that potentially calls for a penalty, perhaps using a highlighter as well. Always separate penalty strokes from actual strokes or as they say for the latter, strokes made by "talent". Make diagrams, tables and charts to carefully keep track. When all of these types of questions are done, check each question again for a missed stroke or a cancelled stroke or a provisional ball that did or didn't count.

Remember, in applying Rule 3-3, there are two simple cases, which include most of the Rule 3-3 situations. First, if the player didn't report to the Committee, it's a

disqualification penalty. Second, if [1] before taking further action, the player has announced which ball he wishes to count, [2] the Rules permit the procedure used for the selected ball and [3] the player reports to the Committee before returning his score card, then the score with the selected ball counts. Otherwise, it's more complicated and you will need to put your thinking hat on to recall both the text of the Rule and situations in the Decisions. If it's a doubtful situation of a ball out of bounds and a provisional ball was played, those two balls must be played into the hole and the Committee will say which ball counts based on whether the original ball was out of bounds or not. There is no requirement for a selection by the player in advance for this case.

You must commit to memory the instances in the Rules that carry a one-stroke penalty. This memorization will save your life many times. There should never be a doubt on what is the penalty associated with a particular situation within a Rule.

When you come to a question and you are really uncertain of the answer, don't force the answer – the answer you are working with is probably the wrong answer. Again, mark the question with a distinctive symbol [a star or a big circle] and come back later when you have finished all the others at the end of the exam. If you almost are out of time, then this is the time to guess, not the first time through. This may be the most important aspect of taking the exam – not forcing an answer when there is uncertainty. Come back later when you may have a fresh idea based on subsequent questions that might deal with the same subject giving you a hint as to the correct answer to guess.

A target time for the closed book part of the exam is one hour. On no account spend more than 1:15 on that part.

There are always those individuals who don't make it through the exam in the time allotted and you will see a lot of page turning through the Decisions book during the open book portion of the exam. This generally means that the student has not mastered the use of the Index, which is absolutely crucial to saving time. Practice using the Index and the Contents to the Index during your studying. Also, having confidence in knowing what a Decision says is a great time saver as opposed to looking it up.

Finally - perhaps this is the first thing that you must do in your study of the Rules - become intimately familiar with the ideas in Richard Tufts' book, The Principles Behind the Rules of Golf. These concepts will provide a solid foundation upon which to build your accumulation of knowledge about the Rules. Besides these principles, there are four central characteristics of the Rules that must be constantly kept in mind in applying the Rules: [1] the interaction between different Rules in terms of one Rule overriding or supplementing another, [2] in the absence of a referee in match play, the Committee may consider a claim only if it has been made in a timely manner and if the player making the claim has notified his opponent at the time that he is making a claim or

wants a ruling and of the facts upon which the claim or ruling is to be based, [3] the role of player's intent being central to several Rules, and [4] the player's awareness, or conversely ignorance, of a given Rule or the facts in a given situation being sometimes important essentials to determining whether a penalty has been incurred or not. Be alert to these four characteristics when evaluating any situation to avoid reaching a superficial conclusion.