

## PENALTIES UNDER RULE 12-1 INCLUDING RULE 18-2

“if the ball is *moved*, Rule 18-2 applies except as provided in clauses a - d of this Rule.”

Buried at the end of the second paragraph of Rule 12-1 is the above quoted statement regarding how Rule 18-2 fits into the provisions of Rule 12-1 and it has a major impact regarding penalties. This statement means that in searching or identifying the ball under Rule 12-1, the provisions of clauses a - d will override Rule 18-2 and govern movement of the ball in several specifically mentioned situations, thus making Rule 12-1 far more complex than it first appears.

Rule 12-1 may be thought of as consisting of two parts: (i) permissions that in some instances override prohibitions in other Rules and (ii) prohibitions or directives that imply a resulting penalty if not followed. Regarding penalties, there is no penalty of one stroke applicable for not following the prohibitive or directive requirements of Rule 12-1. Any violation of these requirements makes the player subject to the general penalty. This is in contrast to Rule 12-2 that gives procedures for lifting a ball for the purpose of identification in which case a player who does not follow the prescribed procedure for lifting incurs a penalty one stroke.

Nine different situations (numbered 1-9 in sequence) exist within the four clauses a - d in which the player incurs a penalty under either Rule 12-1 or Rule 18-2.

### 12-1a. Searching for or Identifying Ball Covered by Sand

There are two situations in which a player incurs a penalty under Rule 12-1a when searching for or identifying his ball believed to be covered with sand anywhere on the course:

- Situation 1. Three conditions must occur. If (i) the ball is not moved in the process of finding and identifying his ball, (ii) sand affecting his lie is moved, and (iii) the player does not comply with the provision of Rule 12-1a to re-create the lie as nearly as possible by replacing the sand before playing the ball, he incurs the general penalty under Rule 12-1a.
- Situation 2. Two conditions must occur. If (i) the ball is moved in the process of finding and identifying his ball, and (ii) the player does not comply with the

provision of Rule 12-1a that the ball must be replaced and the lie re-created before playing the ball, he incurs the general penalty under Rule 12-1a.

Rule 18-2 does not apply in this situation as Rule 12-1a states that there is no penalty for moving the ball during touching or moving sand while searching for and identifying the ball.

#### 12-1b. Searching for or Identifying Ball Covered by Loose Impediments in Hazard

There are two situations in which a player incurs a penalty under Rule 12-1b when searching for or identifying his ball believed to be covered with loose impediments in a hazard:

- Situation 3. Two conditions must occur. If (i) loose impediments are moved in the process of finding or identifying his ball, regardless of whether his ball is moved or not, and (ii) the player does not comply with the provision of Rule 12-1b requiring replacement of the loose impediments before playing the ball, he incurs the general penalty under Rule 12-1b.

If the ball is moved during the touching or moving of loose impediments while searching for or identifying the ball, see Situation 5 below.

- Situation 4. Two conditions must occur. If (i) the ball is moved during the replacement of loose impediments and (ii) the ball is not replaced before playing the ball, the player incurs the general penalty under Rule 12-1b.

Rule 18-2 does not apply in this situation as Rule 12-1b states that there is no penalty for moving the ball during replacement of the loose impediments. This latter statement strongly implies that no part of Rule 18-2 applies to the movement of the ball including the requirement to replace the moved ball.

There is one situation in which a player incurs a penalty under Rule 18-2 when searching for or identifying his ball believed to be covered with loose impediments in a hazard:

- Situation 5. If a player causes his ball to move during the touching or moving of loose impediments while searching for or identifying the ball, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke and must replace the ball. If the ball is not replaced, he incurs the general penalty but no additional penalty under Rule 18-2.

### Rule 12-1c. Searching for Ball in Water in Water Hazard

There is one situation in which a player incurs a penalty under Rule 12-1c when searching for his ball believed to be lying in water in a water hazard:

- Situation 6. Three conditions must occur. If (i) the ball in water is accidentally moved while probing, (ii) the player does not elect to proceed under Rule 26-1 and (iii) the player does not comply with the provisions of Rule 12-1c to replace the ball before playing it, the player incurs the general penalty.

Rule 18-2 does not apply in this situation as Rule 12-1c states that there is no penalty for accidentally moving the ball in water while probing.

There are two situations in which a player incurs a penalty under Rule 18-2 when searching for his ball believed to be lying in water in a water hazard:

- Situation 7. Two conditions must occur. If (i) a player causes his ball to move in the process of finding or identifying his ball and (ii) the moved ball was not lying in water, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and must replace the ball. If the ball is not replaced, he incurs the general penalty but no additional penalty under Rule 18-2.
- Situation 8. Two conditions must occur. If (i) a player causes his ball to move in the process of finding or identifying his ball and (ii) the ball was accidentally moved other than while probing, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and must replace the ball. If the ball is not replaced, he incurs the general penalty but no additional penalty under Rule 18-2.

### 12-1d. Searching for Ball Within Obstruction or Abnormal Ground Condition

There is one situation in which a player incurs a penalty under Rule 12-1d when searching for his ball believed to be lying in or on an obstruction or in an abnormal ground condition:

- Situation 9. Two conditions must occur. If (i) the ball is accidentally moved during search and (ii) the player does not comply with the provision, “the ball must be replaced unless the player elects to proceed under Rule 24-1b, 24-2b or 25-1b as applicable,” before playing the ball, he incurs the general penalty.

Rule 18-2 does not apply in this situation as Rule 12-1d states that there is no penalty for accidentally moving the ball during search.

## POSTSCRIPT

The foregoing is a reasonably straightforward interpretation of the wording in Rule 12-1. Most of the practical situations that will occur are covered within those nine listed above. However, because of the overall complex nature of Rule 12-1 and the relationship between Rule 12-1 and Rule 18-2, a question might arise as to whether multiple penalties should be assessed for violations within each of the nine situations or across situations that are not mutually exclusive.

Neither the USGA nor the R&A have published Decisions that have specifically addressed potential situations involving multiple penalties within Rule 12-1. In what follows, several cases are examined together with suggested solutions. These solutions have not been reviewed by the USGA and should not be interpreted as any more than provisional procedures to be considered in any discussion or analysis of events.

While there are several possible events that can occur involving violations of both Rule 18-2 and Rule 12-1, the following four cases in stroke play are examples that will illustrate the principles that could be applied to similar circumstances and other combination of events:

- Case 1. Within Situation 2 above while searching for his ball covered in sand, it is possible that the player may both (i) fail to replace the ball and (ii) fail to recreate the lie of the ball as required by Rule 12-1a. These two acts are related acts within the context of the specific requirement of Rule 12-1a and if either one or both of these acts occur before playing the ball, a single general penalty under Rule 12-1a would be applied according to principle 3, Decision 1-4/12.
- Case 2. During finding and identifying his ball covered with loose impediments in a hazard, the player removes loose impediments causing his ball to move. There is no penalty for removing the loose impediments according to Rule 12-1b but there is a penalty under Rule 18-2 for moving the ball. Although the player is required to replace both (i) loose impediments (Rule 12-1b) and (ii) ball (Rule 18-2), he fails to do either. There are two Rules breached (Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2) by unrelated acts with the result that multiple penalties would be applied according to principle 5 of Decision 1-4/12. The player would incur a total penalty of four strokes (Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2).
- Case 3. During finding and identifying his ball covered with loose impediments in a hazard, the player removes loose impediments causing his ball to move. Rule 18-2

governs the movement of the ball during this action, assigns a penalty of one stroke and requires him to replace his ball, which he does. Subsequently, when replacing the loose impediments, he causes his ball to move again. Rule 12-1b governs the movement of the ball during this latter action, assigns no penalty and requires him to replace his ball, which he does not do before playing the ball. For this later violation, he would incur the general penalty under Rule 12-1b. There are two Rules breached (Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2) by unrelated acts with the result that multiple penalties would be applied according to principle 5 of Decision 1-4/12. The player would incur a total penalty of three strokes (Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2).

- Case 4. There is variation of Case 3 that is distinct and where principle 2 of Decision 1-4/12 can limit a player's penalty when in violation of both Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2. If during finding and identifying his ball and moving loose impediments, a player causes his ball to move and then subsequently the ball is moved again during the replacement of loose impediments, there is a possibility where one act (failure to replace the ball) would be a violation of both Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2. This would invoke principle 2 of Decision 1-4/12, with the result that there would be only a single penalty applied.

The circumstances in Case 4 require more discussion. Consider the following:

*A player hits his tee shot into a dry water hazard that is covered with loose impediments. He begins searching by moving some loose impediments that uncovers his ball and causes it to move from X to Y. He is aware that he must replace both the ball and the loose impediments. Before replacing the ball at X, he replaces a loose impediment that causes his ball to move from Y to Z.*

There are three conclusions regarding the player's actions up to this point:

- The player is in violation of Rule 18-2 (penalty of one stroke) for causing the ball to move from X to Y during movement of the loose impediments while searching and the ball must be replaced.
- No penalty for moving the loose impediments and the loose impediments must be replaced (Rule 12-1b).
- No penalty for causing the ball to move from Y to Z during replacement of the loose impediment and the ball must be replaced (Rule 12-1b).

These conclusions are reached from a straightforward reading of Rule 12-1 and should not be in question. However, there are three other issues.

### Issue 1 – Point of Replacement

There is an unresolved conflict between Rule 18-2 and Rule 12-1b - at which point must the ball that was twice moved be replaced, X as required by Rule 18-2, or Y as required by Rule 12-1b? The resolution of this issue should be that the required replacement point for the twice moved ball (from X to Y and from Y to Z) is X, the initial location of the original ball before search began. Therefore, if the player replaces the ball at X and makes a stroke, he incurs only the penalty of one stroke under Rule 18-2 and none under Rule 12-1b.

### Issue 2 – Multiple Penalties

At first glance, it would seem that if the player does not replace the ball at X, and plays it from some other place, he would be in violation of two Rules that require replacement and the player would be liable for the general penalty under both Rules for a total penalty of four strokes. However, the failure to replace the ball at X as required by both Rule 12-1b and Rule 18-2 should be considered one act in violation of two Rules (principle 2 of Decision 1-4/12) and a single penalty would be applied for the act of failure to replace.

### Issue 3 – Applied Rule for Failure to Replace

What Rule is applied? The answer comes from the principle of Decision 1-4/15 that requires application of the Rule with the most severe penalty (that is, the most severe result) when a competitor has breached two Rules as a result of a single act. At first glance, it would seem that since both Rules have the same general penalty it would not matter which Rule is selected for application. A closer examination reveals that applying either one or the other of the two Rules to the act of failure to replace would not give the same result:

- If Rule 18-2 is selected for application, the penalty of one stroke incurred for moving the ball at X goes away because of the associated penalty statement of Rule 18-2. The final result would be only a total penalty of two strokes.
- If Rule 12-1b is selected for application, the general penalty from Rule 12-1b is applied. Consequently and additionally, although Rule 18-2 is not applied to the act of failure to replace, Rule 18-2 is applied for the first movement of the ball from X to Y and the penalty of one stroke incurred under Rule 18-2 must be retained. The final result would be a total penalty of three strokes.

An argument could be made that only a single general penalty under Rule 18-2 should be applied as it would not be less than any possible advantage gained by the player. This approach would ignore the guidance of Decision 1-4/12 and Decision 1-4/15.

However, a comparison of the facts from Case 3 to Case 4 gives a good perspective of the player's actions and supports selecting Rule 12-1b. In Case 3 the player replaced the ball moved during search whereas in Case 4 the player did not replace the ball moved during search. Otherwise the player's actions are identical.

In Case 3, he incurred a penalty of one stroke under 18-2 for movement of the ball and a general penalty under Rule 12-1b for failure to replace the ball subsequently moved during replacement of the loose impediments for a total penalty of three strokes.

In Case 4, assigning the general penalty under Rule 18-2 (instead of Rule 12-1b) to the player's act of failure to replace as the single Rule to apply according to principle 2 of Decision 1-4/12 would result in the player receiving only a single penalty of two strokes in total. This would compare with the penalty of three strokes in Case 3. The player's actions in Case 4 are certainly at least as egregious as his actions in Case 3 where the resulting penalty is three strokes. Furthermore, it seems illogical for a player in Case 4 to be able to have a reduction in his penalty to two strokes by virtue of his act of failing to replace a moved ball. Usually, the player is additionally penalized for an act of failing to replace a moved ball. He does not see a reduction in penalty for his failure to replace.

Therefore, as called for in Decision 1-4/15, in order to obtain the most severe result for a single act in violation of two Rules, Rule 12-1 (general penalty) should be applied to the act of failure to replace and Rule 18-2 (one stroke) is applied to the act of accidental movement of the ball during search. The appropriate total penalty for the player's actions in Case 4 as called for by Decision 1-4/12 and Decision 1-4/15 would be three strokes.