

2012 DECISIONS – EIGHT MAJOR REVERSALS

[except those resulting from the revision to Rule 1-2]

2012

4-4a/6 Excess Club Put in Player's Golf Bag

Q. A arrives at the 1st tee. After the match or group's starting time while A is preparing to play his tee shot, B, his opponent or fellow-competitor, by mistake places his driver in A's bag, which results in A having 15 clubs. A then drives from the 1st tee. During play of the 1st hole, A discovers that B's club has been put in his (A's) golf bag. Does A incur a penalty for starting the round with more than 14 clubs?

A. No. Although A started the round with more than 14 clubs, A is not considered to have selected B's club for play for the following reasons:

- the additional club was added to his bag by B on the 1st tee,
- the club was added after the match or group's time of starting, and
- the club had already been selected for play by B.

Therefore A incurs no penalty, provided he does not make a stroke with B's club. The club may be returned to B and used by him.

The decision would be different, and A would be penalized under Rule 4-4a, if:

- the additional club had belonged to a player in another match or group,
- the club had been added before A's match or group arrived on the tee, or
- the club had been added before A's match or group's time of starting.

2010

4-4a/6 Excess Club Put in Player's Golf Bag After Player Has Counted His Clubs at 1st Tee; Error Discovered After Player Has Started Round

Q. A arrives at the 1st tee, counts his clubs and confirms that he is carrying 14. He then removes his driver from his golf bag, leaves the bag beside the tee and checks in with the starter. At this point, X, a player in another match or group, by mistake puts his putter in A's golf bag, which was identical to X's bag. A then drives from the 1st tee. During play of the 1st hole, A discovers that X's club has been put in his (A's) golf bag. Does A incur a penalty for starting the round with more than 14 clubs?

A. Yes.

2012

9-3/1 Competitor in Hole-by-Hole Play-Off Gives Wrong Information

Q. In a stroke-play hole-by-hole play-off, B has completed the hole in 5 strokes. Having no other readily available means for determining B's score at that point, A, who has a putt for a 5, inquires as to the number of strokes B has taken for the hole. B wrongly states that he (B) has holed out in 4 strokes. A picks up his ball without marking its position based on his understanding that B had won the play-off. B then corrects his error. What is the ruling?

A. If B intentionally misled A, B is disqualified under Rule 33-7.

If B simply made a mistake, B incurs no penalty. Rule 9 imposes no penalty for giving wrong information as to the number of strokes in stroke play. In these exceptional circumstances, A incurs no penalty for lifting his ball at rest without marking it. In a stroke-play hole-by-hole play-off, it is not necessary for A to complete the hole if B is the winner (see Decision 33-6/3), and since A had no other readily available means for determining B's score at that point, it was reasonable for A to rely on B's answer. Accordingly, by providing the incorrect information that induced A to lift his ball, B (not A) should be deemed to have caused the movement of A's ball. Therefore, in these limited circumstances, Rule 18-4 applies, i.e., neither player incurs a penalty and A must replace his ball – see Decision 18-1/8 and Decision 18-2a/21. This answer only applies in a stroke-play hole-by-hole play-off. In all other cases during a stroke-play competition, A would be obliged in all events to complete play of the hole and it would therefore not be reasonable for A to lift his ball without marking it.

2010

9-3/1 Competitor in Hole-by-Hole Play-Off Gives Wrong Information

Q. In a stroke-play hole-by-hole play-off, B has completed the hole in 5 strokes. A, who has a putt for a 5, inquires as to B's score for the hole, and B wrongly states that he (B) has holed out in 4 strokes. A picks up his ball without marking its position. B then corrects his mistake. What is the ruling?

A. B incurs no penalty. Rule 9 imposes no penalty for giving wrong information as to the number of strokes taken in stroke play.

A incurs a penalty of one stroke under Rule 20-1 for lifting his ball at rest without marking its position. Since this leaves A with a putt for a 6, he loses the play-off.

2012

10-1a/3 Players Agree Not to Tee Off in Prescribed Order to Save Time

Q. In match play, A wins the 4th hole. On his way to the 5th tee, he returns to retrieve a club left at the 4th green and suggests that his opponent B play first to save time, which B does. In view of Rule 10-1a, have the players agreed to waive the Rules in breach of Rule 1-3?

A. No. When starting play of a hole, a player who has the honor 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 tee off first.

2010

1-3/1 Players Agree Not to Tee Off in Prescribed Order to Save Time

Q. In match play, A wins the 4th hole. On his way to the 5th tee, he returns to retrieve a club left at the 4th green and suggests that his opponent B play first to save time, which B does. Are the players in breach of Rule 1-3?

A. In order to waive a Rule, players must be aware that they are doing so. Therefore, the answer depends on whether the players knew that the Rules do not allow them the option as to who plays first from the tee.

If the players were ignorant of the Rules, there is no penalty.

If the players were aware of the Rules and agreed not to follow them, they are in breach of Rule 1-3 for agreeing to exclude the operation of Rule 10-1a. However, in these circumstances, the Committee would be justified in waiving the disqualification penalty under Rule 33-7. If the players subsequently agreed to exclude the operation of Rule 10-1a, they should be disqualified.

2012

13-4/11 Smoothing Footprints Made in Search for Ball in Bunker Before Playing Stroke from Bunker

Q. A player searches for his ball in a bunker and in the process makes numerous footprints. He subsequently finds his ball in the bunker. Before playing his stroke, may the player or his caddie smooth the footprints?

A. Exception 2 to Rule 13-4 would allow the player to smooth the footprints provided it is done for the sole purpose of caring for the course and nothing is done to improve any area covered by Rule 13-2 with respect to his next stroke. Therefore, any footprints made that have worsened any area covered by Rule 13-2 with respect to his next stroke must not be smoothed.

2010

13-4/11 Smoothing Footprints Made in Search for Ball in Bunker Before Playing Stroke from Bunker

Q. A player searches for his ball in a bunker and in the process makes numerous footprints. He subsequently finds his ball. Before playing his stroke, may the player or his caddie smooth the footprints?

A. No, such action would be a breach of Rule 13-4.

2012

13-4/16 Removal of Loose Impediment in Water Hazard Covering Wrong Ball

Q. A player plays his ball into a water hazard. He finds a ball in the hazard and, in order to identify the ball, removes a loose impediment partially covering it. He discovers that the ball is not his ball. He searches for his ball but does not find it. He proceeds under Rule 26-1. Is the player subject to penalty under Rule 13-4 for removing the loose impediment?

A. No. Rule 12-1b permits the player to touch or remove loose impediments in a hazard in order to find or identify his ball that is believed to be covered by loose impediments.

2010

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A. Yes.

2012

15-3b/2 Play of Two Different Wrong Balls Between Strokes with Ball in Play

Q. In stroke play, a competitor plays a wrong ball to a putting green. He discovers his error and returns to the spot from which the wrong ball was played. He finds another ball and plays it to the green. He then discovers that he has played another wrong ball. Is the penalty two strokes or four strokes?

A. Four strokes. The competitor's discovery that he had played a wrong ball is an intervening event that breaks the relationship between the two strokes. The subsequent playing of another wrong ball is therefore an unrelated act. Accordingly, the player is separately penalized for play of each wrong ball, under Principle 6 of Decision 1-4/12 and Decision 1-4/13.

2010

15-3b/2 Play of Two Different Wrong Balls Between Strokes with Ball in Play

Q. In stroke play, a competitor plays a wrong ball to a putting green. He discovers his error and returns to the spot from which the wrong ball was played. He finds another ball and plays it to the green. He then discovers that he has played another wrong ball. Is the penalty two strokes or four strokes?

A. Two strokes for a breach of Rule 15-3b. A penalty of four strokes for playing two wrong balls in succession before a stroke with the correct ball would not be justified.

2012

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

Q. A player's ball lies in a bunker. He plays, and his ball is accidentally stopped or deflected by a rake that is being held by his caddie. What is the ruling?

A. When a ball is accidentally deflected or stopped by a rake held by or in contact with a player's caddie, the caddie has accidentally deflected or stopped the player's ball in motion in breach of Rule 19-2. The player is responsible for this breach of the Rules by his caddie (see Rule 6-1). The player incurs a penalty of one stroke and must play the ball as it lies.

2010

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

Q. A player's ball lies in a bunker. He plays, and his ball is accidentally stopped or deflected by a rake that is being held by his caddie. What is the ruling?

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

2012

33-7/4.5 Competitor Unaware of Penalty Returns Wrong Score; Whether Waiving or Modifying Disqualification Penalty Justified

Q. A competitor returns his score card. It later transpires that the score for one hole is lower than actually taken due to his failure to include a penalty stroke(s) which he did not know he had incurred. The error is discovered before the competition has closed. Would the Committee be justified, under Rule 33-7, in waiving or modifying the penalty of disqualification prescribed in Rule 6-6d?

A. Generally, the disqualification prescribed by Rule 6-6d must not be waived or modified. However, if the Committee is satisfied that the competitor could not reasonably have known or discovered the facts resulting in his breach of the Rules, it would be justified under Rule 33-7 in waiving the disqualification penalty prescribed by Rule 6-6d. The penalty stroke(s) associated with the breach would, however, be applied to the hole where the breach occurred.

For example, in the following scenarios, the Committee would be justified in waiving the disqualification penalty:

- A competitor makes a short chip from the greenside rough. At the time, he and his fellow-competitors have no reason to suspect that the competitor has double-hit his ball in breach of Rule 14-4. After the competitor has signed and returned his score card, a close-up, super-slow-motion video replay reveals that the competitor struck his ball twice during the course of the stroke. In these circumstances, it would be appropriate for the Committee to waive the disqualification penalty and apply the one-stroke penalty under Rule 14-4 to the competitor's score at the hole in question.
- After a competitor has signed and returned his score card, it becomes known, through the use of a high-definition video replay, that the competitor unknowingly touched a few grains of sand with his club at the top of his backswing on a wall of the bunker. The touching of the sand was so light that, at the time, it was reasonable for the competitor to have been unaware that he had breached Rule 13-4. It would be appropriate for the Committee to waive the disqualification penalty and apply the two-stroke penalty to the competitor's score at the hole in question.
- A competitor moves his ball on the putting green with his finger in the act of removing his ball-marker. The competitor sees the ball move slightly forward but is certain that it has returned to the original spot, and he plays the ball as it lies. After the competitor signs and returns his score card, video footage is brought to the attention of the Committee that reveals that the ball did not precisely return to its original spot. When questioned by the Committee, the competitor cites the fact that the position of the logo on the ball appeared to be in exactly the same position as it was when he replaced the ball and this was the reason for him believing that the ball returned to the original spot. As it was reasonable in these circumstances for the competitor to have no doubt that the ball had returned to the original spot, and because the competitor could not himself have reasonably discovered otherwise prior to signing and returning his score card, it would be appropriate for the Committee to waive the disqualification penalty. The two stroke penalty under Rule 20-3a for playing from

a wrong place would, however, be applied to the competitor's score at the hole in question. A Committee would not be justified under Rule 33-7 in waiving or modifying the disqualification penalty prescribed in Rule 6-6d if the competitor's failure to include the penalty stroke(s) was a result of either ignorance of the Rules or of facts that the competitor could have reasonably discovered prior to signing and returning his score card. For example, in the following scenarios, the Committee would not be justified in waiving or modifying the disqualification penalty:

- As a competitor's ball is in motion, he moves several loose impediments in the area in which the ball will likely come to rest. Unaware that this action is a breach of Rule 23-1, the competitor fails to include the two stroke penalty in his score for the hole. As the competitor was aware of the facts that resulted in his breaching the Rules, he should be disqualified under Rule 6-6d for failing to include the two-stroke penalty under Rule 23-1.
- A competitor's ball lies in a water hazard. In making his backswing for the stroke, the competitor is aware that his club touched a branch in the hazard. Not realising at the time that the branch was detached, the competitor did not include the two-stroke penalty for a breach of Rule 13-4 in his score for the hole. As the competitor could have reasonably determined the status of the branch prior to signing and returning his score card, the competitor should be disqualified under Rule 6-6d for failing to include the two-stroke penalty under Rule 13-4.

2010

33-7/4.5 Competitor Unaware of Penalty Returns Wrong Score; Whether Waiving or Modifying Disqualification Penalty Justified

Q. A competitor returns his score card and the score for one hole is lower than actually taken due to his failure to include a penalty of two stroke which he did not know he had incurred. The error is discovered before the competition has closed.

Would the Committee be justified, under Rule 33-7, in waiving or modifying the penalty of disqualification prescribed in Rule 6-6d?

A. No. It is the responsibility of the competitor to know the Rules.