

IMPACT OF 2012 REWRITE OF RULE 1-2 ON DECISIONS

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

A player must not (i) take an action with the intent to influence the movement of a ball in play or (ii) alter physical conditions with the intent of affecting the playing of a hole.

Exceptions:

1. An action expressly permitted or expressly prohibited by another Rule is subject to that other Rule, not Rule 1-2.
2. An action taken for the sole purpose of caring for the course is not a breach of Rule 1-2.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF RULE 1-2:

Match play – Loss of hole; Stroke play – Two strokes.

In the case of a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the Committee may impose a penalty of disqualification.

Note 1: A player is deemed to have committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2 if the Committee considers that the action taken in breach of this Rule has allowed him or another player to gain a significant advantage or has placed another player, other than his partner, at a significant disadvantage.

Note 2: In stroke play, except where a serious breach resulting in disqualification is involved, a player in breach of Rule 1-2 in relation to the movement of his own ball must play the ball from where it was stopped, or, if the ball was deflected, from where it came to rest. If the movement of a player's ball has been intentionally influenced by a fellow-competitor or other outside agency, Rule 1-4 applies to the player (see Note to Rule 19-1).

In addition to adding two new Rule 1-2 Decisions for 2012, the rewrite of Rule 1-2 has had impact on a total of 26 existing Decisions in the 2011 book, comprising revision of 20 Decisions [including two that were renumbered] and withdrawal of six Decisions. None of the 20 revised Decisions are listed within the 2012 Decisions book under the category of "REVISED DECISIONS," with accompanying reasons for revision; however, 18 revised Decisions are categorized as "DECISIONS REVISED DUE TO RULES CHANGES AND DECISIONS WITH MINOR REVISIONS" and two revised Decisions are categorized as "RENUMBERED." There is no explanation given for removal of the six withdrawn Decisions.

In what follows herein is the text of two new Decisions; a comparison of the text of the 20 revised Decisions to text of the corresponding 2011 Decisions; and the text of the six withdrawn Decisions.

NEW DECISIONS [2]

1-2/0.7 Meaning of “Sole Purpose of Caring for the Course”

Q. What is the meaning of the phrase “sole purpose of caring for the course” in Exception 2 to Rule 1-2?

A. The phrase “sole purpose of caring for the course” in the Exception refers to the performance of acts that are encouraged in the Etiquette Section of the Rules of Golf provided they are taken at the appropriate time and in a manner permitted by the Rules. The provisions of Rule 1-2 do not prevent a player from taking acts that conform with the Etiquette Section, so long as the player does so for the sole purpose of caring for the course and without intentionally influencing the movement of a ball, or the physical conditions affecting play, of a player in the player’s group or match. For example, while a player may not smooth the ragged edge of a hole or tap down spike marks in order to influence the movement of a ball of an opponent, fellow-competitor or partner, the player may generally smooth the ragged edge of a hole or tap down spike marks as a courtesy to players in following groups or matches, or for care of the course (see Decision 1-2/3.5). Similarly, while a player may not press down a piece of turf in the area in which a ball in motion may come to rest or in the area in which a ball is to be dropped or placed with the intention of influencing the movement of the ball, a player generally may attempt to tidy up the course by repairing divot holes and/or replacing divots that do not affect play of the hole by a player in the player’s group or match (see Decision 1-2/8).

1-2/3 Breaking Bush in Area into Which Ball May Roll After Drop

Q. A player elects to take relief from an area of ground under repair through the green. He correctly determines his nearest point of relief and the one club-length area in which the ball must be dropped under Rule 25-1b(i). The player is aware that there is a small bush located outside the dropping area. Fearing that his ball could come to rest close to the bush when dropped, without a re-drop being required under Rule 20-2c, the player intentionally breaks off and removes part of the bush. What is the ruling?

A. As the player has not improved the area in which a ball is to be dropped, (i.e., the area in which the ball must first strike a part of the course when dropped under Rule 25-1b(i)), Rule 13-2 does not apply. However, the player is in breach of Rule 1-2 for taking an action with the intent to affect the playing of the hole by altering the physical conditions.

The same principles apply to a situation where a player’s ball is at rest, but he fears that it might move. For example, if a player’s ball is at rest on a steep slope through the green and he breaks an attached tree branch that might interfere with his swing if the ball were to roll ten feet down the slope, the player is in breach of Rule 1-2 for taking an action with the intent to affect the playing of the hole by altering the physical conditions.

DECISIONS REVISED DUE TO RULES CHANGES AND DECISIONS WITH MINOR REVISIONS [18]

1-2/0.5 Serious Breach of Rule 1-2

2012

Q. Should the standard for determining whether a serious breach of Rule 1-2 has occurred be the same in match play and stroke play?

A. In deciding whether a player has committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the Committee should consider all aspects of the incident. Given the different impact on players in match play and stroke play, it is possible for the same act to constitute a serious breach of Rule 1-2 in stroke play but not in match play. In many cases in match play (e.g., a player who intentionally stops his ball from entering a water hazard), a penalty of loss of hole is sufficient while in stroke play the player should be disqualified for a serious breach. In some cases (e.g., the purposeful act of damaging the line of putt referred to in Decision 1-2/1), a penalty of disqualification in match play may be appropriate.

2011

Q. Should the standard for determining whether a serious breach of Rule 1-2 has occurred be the same in match play and stroke play?

A. In deciding whether a player has committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the Committee should consider all aspects of the incident. Given the different impact on players in match play and stroke play, it is possible for the same act to constitute a serious breach of Rule 1-2 in stroke play but not in match play. In many cases in match play (e.g., a player who intentionally stops his ball from entering a water hazard), a penalty of loss of hole is sufficient while in stroke play the player should be disqualified for a serious breach. In some cases (e.g., the purposeful act referred to in the first paragraph of the answer in Decision 17-3/2), a penalty of disqualification in match play is appropriate.

1-2/1.5 Competitor Alters Line of Play of Fellow-Competitor

2012

Q. In stroke play, A's ball is under a partially detached tree branch from which he believes he is entitled to relief without penalty. A calls for a ruling. B, A's fellow-competitor, argues A's case to a referee and, during the conversation, lifts the branch and improves or worsens A's line of play. What is the ruling?

A. As B did not alter physical conditions with the intent of affecting A's playing of the hole, B is not in breach of Rule 1-2. A incurs no penalty. A may replace the branch, but he is not required to do so.

2011

Q. In stroke play, A's ball is under a partially detached tree branch from which he believes he is entitled to relief without penalty. A calls for a ruling. B, A's fellow-competitor, argues A's case to a member of the Committee and, during the conversation, lifts the branch and improves or worsens A's line of play. What is the ruling?

A. As B's actions were not made with the intention of improving or worsening A's line of play, he is not in breach of Rule 1-2. The branch may be replaced, but A is not required to do so.

1-2/2 Shielding Line of Putt from Wind

2012

Q. May a player lay his golf bag parallel to the line of putt to shield the line from the wind?

A. No. Such an action taken with the intent to influence the movement of the ball would be a breach of Rule 1-2, even if the golf bag were removed prior to the stroke being made.

2011

Q. May a player lay his golf bag parallel to the line of putt to shield the line from the wind?

A. No. Such procedure would be a breach of Rule 1-2.

1-2/3.5 Player Repairs Hole After Holing Out But Before Opponent, Fellow-Competitor or Partner Holes Out

2012

Q. After holing out, a player observes that the edge of the hole is ragged. He pats the ragged edge with his hand and smoothes it. Does the player incur a penalty under Rule 1-2 if his opponent, fellow-competitor or partner has not holed out?

A. If the player smoothed the edge of the hole solely for the purpose of caring for the course, he was not in breach of Rule 1-2. However, if the smoothing of the ragged edge was in any way intended to influence the movement of his opponent's, fellow-competitor's or partner's ball, or alter physical conditions with the intent of affecting the playing of the hole, he was in breach of Rule 1-2. It is recommended that a player should only smooth the ragged edge of a hole after all players in the group or match have completed play of the hole.

As the player had holed out, he is not subject to penalty under Rule 16-1a or Rule 13-2.

In a four-ball competition, if the player's partner had not completed play of the hole, the partner incurs the penalty for a breach of Rule 16-1a – see Definition of "Partner."

2011

Q. After holing out, a player observes that the edge of the hole is ragged. He pats the ragged edge with his hand and smoothes it. Does the player incur a penalty under Rule 1-2 if his opponent, fellow-competitor or partner has not holed out?

A. If the player smoothed the edge of the hole as a courtesy to the players in following groups or for the care of the course, he was not in breach of Rule 1-2. However, if the player's primary purpose in smoothing the ragged edge was to influence the movement of his opponent's, fellow-competitor's, or partner's ball, he was in breach of 1-2.

As the player had holed out, he is not subject to penalty under Rule 16-1a or Rule 13-2.

In a four-ball competition, if the player's partner had not completed play of the hole, the partner incurs the penalty for a breach of Rule 16-1a – See Definition of "Partner".

2012

1-2/4 Player Jumps Close to Hole to Cause Ball to Fall into Hole

Q. A player whose ball overhangs the lip of the hole jumps close to the hole in the hope of jarring the ground and causing the ball to fall into the hole. Is the player penalized under Rule 1-2 for trying to exert influence on the movement of his ball in play?

A. If the player's ball was at rest (or deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2) and does not move, Rule 1-2 does not apply because the player was attempting to move a ball at rest and this is specifically covered by Rule 18-2a (see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2). As the ball did not move, there was no penalty under Rule 18-2a.

If the player's ball was at rest (or deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2) and the ball moves, Rule 1-2 does not apply because Rule 18-2a specifically covers a ball at rest moved by the player – see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2. The player is deemed to have caused his ball to move and incurs a penalty of one stroke in both match play and stroke play under Rule 18-2a and the ball must be replaced.

If the player's ball was still moving when the player jumped, Rule 1-2 was the applicable Rule because the player took an action with the intent to influence the movement of the ball. In match play, he lost the hole. In stroke play, he incurred a penalty of two strokes and must play the ball from where it came to rest; if the ball was holed, the player completed play of the hole with his last stroke and must apply the two-stroke penalty under Rule 1-2.

2011

1-2/4 Player Jumps Close to Hole to Cause Ball to Drop; Ball Moves

Q. A ball overhangs the lip of the hole. The player jumps close to the hole in the hope of jarring the earth and causing the ball to fall into the hole, which it does. Is this permissible?

A. No.

If the ball was still moving when the player jumped, the player took action to influence the movement of the ball in breach of Rule 1-2. In match play, he lost the hole. In stroke play, he incurred a penalty of two strokes, and the ball was holed.

If the ball was at rest when the player jumped, it should be assumed that the player caused the ball to move, and he incurred a penalty of one stroke in both match and stroke play under Rule 18-2a and was required to replace the ball.

If it is not possible to determine whether the ball was still moving, it should be presumed to be moving unless it was deemed to be at rest under Rule 16-2.

1-2/5.5 Player Purposely Stops or Deflects Ball; Where Next Stroke Must Be Played From

2012

Q. A player's ball lies through the green. After playing a pitch shot up a slope, the player sees his ball start to roll back towards him. He places his club in front of the ball and stops it. The ball would have rolled only a few yards more and remained through the green. What is the ruling?

A. Since the player purposely stopped the ball, he is in breach of Rule 1-2. As the breach was not serious, the player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. In stroke play, he must play the ball from the point where he stopped it with his club – see Note 2 to Rule 1-2.

If the player had purposely deflected the ball but not stopped it, in match play, he would lose the hole. In stroke play, if a serious breach has not occurred, he would incur a two-stroke penalty and must then play the ball from its new position – see Note 2 to Rule 1-2. In stroke play, if a serious breach has occurred, the player is disqualified.

Rule 19-2 is not applicable since it only covers situations when a player accidentally deflects or stops his ball.

2011

Q. A player's ball lies through the green. After playing a pitch shot up a slope, the player sees his ball start to roll back towards him. He places his club in front of the ball and stops it. The ball would have rolled only a few yards more and remained through the green. What is the ruling?

A. Since the player purposely stopped the ball, he is in breach of Rule 1-2. As the breach was not serious, he would lose the hole in match play or incur a two-stroke penalty in stroke play. In stroke play, he must play the ball from the point where he stopped it with his club.

If the player had purposely deflected the ball but not stopped it, in match play, he would lose the hole. In stroke play, if a serious breach has not occurred, he would incur a two-stroke penalty and must then play the ball from its new position. In stroke play, if a serious breach has occurred, the player is disqualified.

1-2/7 Player Purposely Deflects Partner's Ball in Motion on Putting Green

2012

Q. In four-ball match play, A and B are playing C and D. All four balls lie on the putting green in five strokes. A lies four feet from the hole and B lies 30 feet from the hole. Player A is standing near and behind the hole with respect to B's line of putt while B putts. B's ball goes past the hole and is rolling towards where A is standing. Without waiting for B's ball to come to rest, A knocks B's ball back to B. What is the ruling?

A. A's intentional interference with the movement of B's ball is a breach of Rule 1-2. However, the penalty for that breach is incurred by B – the partner whose ball was in motion – and results in disqualification from the hole for B. A may continue to represent the side without penalty as the breach of Rule 1-2 did not assist him.

2011

Q. In four-ball match play, A and B are playing C and D. All four balls lie on the putting green in five strokes. A lies four feet from the hole and B lies 30 feet from the hole. Player A is standing near and behind the hole with respect to B's line of putt while B putts. B's ball goes past the hole and is rolling towards where A is standing. Without waiting for B's ball to come to rest, A knocks B's ball back to B. What is the ruling?

A. A and B abandoned B's right to complete the hole when A returned B's ball to him after his failure to hole his putt. Such a casual action by A is not contemplated by Rule 1-2 and, in such circumstances, is not a breach of Rule 1-2 or any other Rule. Although Side A-B abandoned B's right to complete the hole, A may continue to represent the side without penalty.

1-2/8 Player Presses Down Turf as Ball Is Rolling Towards Area

2012

Q. A player's ball lies through the green at the bottom of a slope. The player makes a stroke and sees that his ball is rolling back down the slope towards the spot from which he just played. Before the ball reaches that spot, the player presses down a raised piece of turf in that area with the intent of ensuring that his ball will not come to rest against the raised piece of turf or in the divot hole. Is the player in breach of Rule 1-2?

A. Yes, as he acted with the intent to influence the movement of his ball in play and with the intent to alter the physical conditions affecting playing of the hole. As the pressing down of the raised piece of turf was not for the sole purpose of caring for the course, Exception 2 to Rule 1-2 does not apply. If the player had not realized his ball was returning to the area, there would be no breach of Rule 1-2.

2011

Q. A player's ball lies through the green at the bottom of a slope. The player makes a stroke and sees that his ball is rolling back down the slope towards the spot from which he just played. Before the ball reaches that spot, the player presses down a raised piece of turf in that area with the intent of ensuring that his ball will not come to rest against the raised piece of turf or in the divot hole. Is the player in breach of Rule 1-2?

A. Yes, as he took an action with the intention to influence the movement of the ball.

If the player had not realized his ball was returning to the area, there would be no breach.

16-1a/10 Loose Impediments Brushed Along Line of Putt Rather Than to Side

2012

Q. In removing loose impediments from his line of putt by brushing with a putter, a player brushed along the line for about one foot before brushing the impediments to the side. Did the player infringe Rule 16-1?

A. Under Rule 16-1a, a player is allowed to brush aside loose impediments on his line of putt. The casual movement of the putter along the line of putt would not be a breach of the Rules unless in the process the player did something to the putting green that improved his line of putt, (e.g., pressed down a raised tuft of grass), in which case he would be in breach of Rule 13-2.

2011

Q. In removing loose impediments from his line of putt by brushing with a putter, a player brushed along the line for about one foot before brushing the impediments to the side. Did the player infringe Rule 16-1?

A. Under Rule 16-1a, a player is allowed to brush aside loose impediments on his line of putt. The casual movement of the putter along the line of putt would not be a breach of the Rules unless in the process the player did something to the putting green which might influence the movement of his ball when played (Rule 1-2).

16-1a/13 Line of Putt Damaged Accidentally by Opponent, Fellow- Competitor or Their Caddies

2012

Q. An opponent, fellow-competitor or one of their caddies accidentally steps on and damages the player's line of putt. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. Rule 1-2 is not applicable as the physical conditions were not altered with the intent of affecting the playing of the hole.

In equity (Rule 1-4), the player may have the line of putt restored to its original condition. The player is entitled to the lie and line of putt he had when his ball came to rest. The line of putt may be restored by anyone.

If it is not possible to restore the line of putt, the player would be justified in requesting the Committee to grant relief. If the damage is severe enough, the Committee may declare the area to be ground under repair, in which case the competitor may take relief under Rule 25-1b(iii).

2011

Q. An opponent, fellow-competitor or one of their caddies accidentally steps on and damages the player's line of putt. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. Rule 1-2 is not applicable.

In equity (Rule 1-4), the player may have the line of putt restored to its original condition.

The player is entitled to the lie and line of putt he had when his ball came to rest. The line of putt may be restored by anyone.

If it is not possible to restore the line of putt, the player would be justified in requesting the Committee to grant relief. If the damage is severe enough, the Committee may declare the area to be ground under repair, in which case the competitor may take relief under Rule 25-1b(iii).

16-1a/17 Ball Lifted on Putting Green Placed Ahead of Ball-Marker and Then Moved Back to Original Position

2012

Q. When replacing his ball on the putting green, a player has a habit of placing the ball ahead of his ball-marker and then rolling or sliding the ball to its original position. Is such a procedure permissible?

A. Such a procedure is not recommended but is not a breach of Rule 16-1a, which permits touching the line of putt in lifting (or replacing) the ball. However, if in the process the player does something to the putting green that improves his line of putt (e.g., presses down a raised tuft of grass), he is in breach of Rule 13-2.

2011

Q. When replacing his ball on the putting green, a player has a habit of placing the ball ahead of his ball-marker and then rolling or sliding the ball to its original position. Is such a procedure permissible?

A. Such a procedure is not recommended but is not a breach of Rule 16-1a which permits touching the line of putt in lifting (or replacing) the ball. However, if in the process the player does something to the putting green which might influence the movement of the ball when played, e.g., presses down a raised tuft of grass, he is in breach of Rule 1-2.

16-1b/3 Ball Lifted from Putting Green; Ball Replaced While Another Ball in Motion Subsequently Deflects Ball

2012

Q. A's ball comes to rest on the putting green 20 feet from the hole. He marks the position of and lifts his ball so that B, whose ball is also on the putting green, but farther from the hole, can play first. While B's ball is in motion, A replaces his ball. B's ball strikes A's ball. What is the ruling?

A. If A's action was unintentional (i.e., not for the purpose of deflecting B's ball), Rule 19-5a applies. There is no penalty to either player since A had lifted his ball and it was not lying on the putting green immediately prior to B's stroke. A must replace his ball, and B must play his ball as it lies.

If A's action was for the purpose of deflecting B's ball, A is in breach of Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions). The penalty is loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play, unless the Committee decides to impose a penalty of disqualification – see the penalty statement under Rule 1-2. In stroke play, B must replay his stroke, without penalty – see Note under Rule 19-1. Rule 16-1b does not apply as this Rule deals with the lifting of a ball on a putting green, but not its placement.

2011

Q. A's ball comes to rest on the putting green 20 feet from the hole. He marks the position of and lifts his ball so that B, whose ball is also on the putting green, but farther from the hole, can play first. While B's ball is in motion, A replaces his ball. B's ball strikes A's ball. What is the ruling?

A. If A's action was unintentional, i.e., not for the purpose of deflecting B's ball, Rule 19-5a applies. There is no penalty to either player since A had lifted his ball and it was not lying on the putting green immediately prior to B's stroke. A must replace his ball, and B must play his ball as it lies.

If A's actions were for the purpose of deflecting B's ball, A is in breach of Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Ball). In equity (Rule 1-4), B must replay his stroke, without penalty — see Note under Rule 19-1.

17/4 Adjustment of Flagstick; Player's Rights

2012

Q. A player playing from off the putting green and wishing to leave the flagstick in the hole may find that the flagstick is leaning towards his ball (a disadvantage) or away from his ball (an advantage). What are the player's rights in such a situation?

A. The flagstick may be left as it is or centered in the hole, as contemplated by the Definition of "Flagstick".

The flagstick may not be intentionally adjusted to a more favorable position than centered. To do so would infringe Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions).

An opponent or fellow-competitor who centers the flagstick incurs no penalty, but the player may have it restored to its original position.

2011

Q. A player playing from off the green and wishing to leave the flagstick in the hole may find that the flagstick is leaning towards his ball (a disadvantage) or away from his ball (an advantage). What are the player's rights in such a situation?

A. The flagstick may be left as it is or centered in the hole, as contemplated by the Definition of "Flagstick."

The flagstick may not be adjusted to a more favorable position than centered. To do so would infringe Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Ball).

An opponent or fellow-competitor who centers the flagstick incurs no penalty, but the player may have it restored to its original position.

17-3/2 Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Attending Flagstick for Player Fails to Remove It; Player's Ball Strikes Flagstick

2012

Q. A's ball lies on the putting green. A requests B, his opponent or fellow-competitor, to attend the flagstick, and B complies. A putts and B fails to remove the flagstick. A's ball strikes the flagstick. What is the ruling?

A. If B failed to remove the flagstick for the purpose of causing A to incur a penalty, B is disqualified, in both match play and stroke play, under Rule 33-7 for taking an action contrary to the spirit of the game. In stroke play, in equity (Rule 1-4), A must replay the stroke without penalty.

If B's failure to remove the flagstick was with the intent to influence the movement of A's ball (e.g., for the purpose of preventing A's ball from going beyond the flagstick), B is in breach of Rule 1-2, and loses the hole in match play or incurs a two-stroke penalty in stroke play, whether the ball strikes the flagstick or not. In stroke play, if the ball struck the flagstick and as a result A suffered significant advantage or disadvantage, then the Committee could consider B to have committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, the penalty for which is disqualification. Whether or not B has committed a serious breach of Rule 1-2, in stroke play, if A's ball struck the flagstick, in equity (Rule 1-4), A must replay the stroke without penalty – see Note 2 to Rule 1-2.

If B's failure to remove the flagstick was not deliberate (e.g., the flagstick stuck in the hole-liner or B was distracted and did not see A putt), since B was acting on A's behalf, A incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 17-3. A must play the ball as it lies. B incurs no penalty.

2011

Q. A requests B, his opponent or a fellow-competitor, to attend the flagstick, and B complies. A putts too firmly and B fails to remove the flagstick. A's ball strikes the flagstick. What is the ruling?

A. If B failed to remove the flagstick for the purpose of causing A to incur a penalty, B is disqualified in both match play and stroke play for a serious breach of Rule 1-2. In stroke play, in equity (Rule 1-4), A must replay the stroke without penalty.

If B's failure to remove the flagstick was for the purpose of preventing A's ball from going beyond the flagstick and not for the purpose of causing A to incur a penalty, in match play B lost the hole under Rule 1-2 when he failed to remove the flagstick before A's ball reached the hole. The fact that A's ball subsequently struck the flagstick (a breach of Rule 17-3a) is irrelevant since B had already lost the hole. In stroke play, B incurs a penalty of two strokes under Rule 1-2, and A incurs the same penalty under Rule 17-3a.

If B's failure to remove the flagstick was not deliberate, e.g., the flagstick stuck in the socket or B was distracted and did not see A putt, A incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 17-3. B incurs no penalty.

20-1/19 Placing Object Marking Position of Ball Other Than Behind Ball

2012

Q. When marking the position of a ball, must the ball-marker be placed behind the ball, or may it also be placed to the side of or in front of the ball?

A. There is no restriction. However, if a player positions his ball-marker in front of the ball on the putting green and in the process does something to the green that improves the line of putt (e.g., presses down a raised tuft of grass), he is in breach of Rule 13-2.

Placing a ball-marker in front of the ball is not recommended but it is not a breach of Rule 16-1a because this Rule permits touching the line of putt in lifting a ball, and marking the position of the ball is part of the lifting process.

2011

Q. When marking the position of a ball, must the ball-marker be placed behind the ball, or may it also be placed to the side of or in front of the ball?

A. There is no restriction. However, if a player positions his ball-marker in front of the ball on the putting green and in the process does something to the green which might influence the movement of the ball when played, e.g., presses down a raised tuft of grass, he is in breach of Rule 1-2.

Placing a ball-marker in front of the ball is not recommended but it is not a breach of Rule 16-1a because this Rule permits touching the line of putt in lifting a ball, and marking the position of the ball is part of the lifting process.

20-2a/5 Caddie Holds Back Tree Branch to Prevent Branch from Deflecting Dropped Ball

2012

Q. May a player have his caddie hold back a tree branch that is waist high and situated at the spot at which the player wishes to drop his ball under a Rule?

If the branch is not held back, the dropped ball might lodge in the branch or, in any case, the branch will be likely to deflect the dropped ball.

A. No. Such an act would be a breach of Rule 13-2, which prohibits a player from improving the area in which he is to drop or place a ball by, among other things, moving or bending anything that is growing or fixed. The branch is part of the course in the area in which the player is to drop, and the player must accept that his ball may first strike the branch when proceeding under a Rule that requires the player to drop (see Decision 20-2c/1.3). The player would be in breach of Rule 13-2 at the moment that his caddie moves the branch. The penalty is not avoided if the branch is released prior to the player dropping the ball; the fact that the branch may return to its original location is irrelevant.

2011

Q. May a player have his caddie hold back a tree branch that is waist high and situated at the spot at which the player wishes to drop his ball under a Rule?

If the branch is not held back, the dropped ball might lodge in the branch or, in any case, the branch will be likely to deflect the dropped ball.

A. No. Such an act would be exerting influence on the position or movement of the ball, contrary to Rule 1-2.

20-2c/4 Caddie Stops Dropped Ball Before It Comes to Rest; When Penalty Incurred

2012

Q. A player's caddie deliberately stops a ball dropped by the player. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty if the caddie stops the ball after it has rolled to a position from which the player would be required to re-drop it under Rule 20-2c, provided it is reasonable to assume that the ball would not return to a position at which Rule 20-2c would be inapplicable.

However, if a player's caddie acts prematurely and stops a dropped ball before it has reached such a position, the player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 1-2 (see reference to Rule 1-2 under Rule 20-2a). In stroke play, he must play the ball as it lies where it was stopped. If the ball was lifted at the time it was stopped, the ball must be replaced where it was stopped with no additional penalty. In these circumstances, 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 (two strokes under Rule 1-2) is appropriate (see Principle 4 in Decision 1-4/12).

The same ruling would apply if the player's ball was deliberately stopped by the player, his partner, his partner's caddie or someone else authorized by the player (e.g., an opponent or fellow-competitor).

2011

Q. A player's caddie deliberately stops a ball dropped by the player. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty if the caddie stops the ball after it has rolled to a position from which the player would be required to re-drop it under Rule 20-2c, provided it is reasonable to assume that the ball would not return to a position at which Rule 20-2c would be inapplicable.

However, if a player's caddie acts prematurely and stops a dropped ball before it has reached such a position, the player incurs a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play under Rule 1-2 (see reference to Rule 1-2 under Rule 20-2a). In stroke play, he must play the ball as it lies where it was stopped. If the ball was lifted after it was stopped, the ball must be replaced.

The same principle would apply if the player's ball was deliberately stopped by the player, his partner, his partner's caddie or someone else authorized by the player (e.g., an opponent or fellow-competitor).

23-1/10 Removal of Loose Impediments Affecting Player's Play

2012

Q. A player with a downhill putt picks up loose impediments between his ball and the hole but leaves some behind the hole. An opponent or fellow-competitor removes loose impediments behind the hole that might have served as a backstop for the player's ball. What is the ruling?

A. In equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled, but not required, to replace the loose impediments.

The opponent or fellow-competitor is permitted to remove the loose impediments by Rule 23-1, and accordingly he is not in breach of Rule 1-2 (see Exception 1 to Rule 1-2). However, if the opponent or fellow-competitor has refused to comply with a request from the player not to remove the loose impediments, the opponent loses the hole (see Decision 2/3) or the fellow-competitor is disqualified (Rule 3-4) for intentionally denying the player's right to have the loose impediments left in position.

The same principles apply to the removal of a movable obstruction in similar circumstances.

2011

Q. A player with a downhill putt picks up loose impediments between his ball and the hole but leaves some behind the hole. An opponent or fellow-competitor wants to remove the impediments behind the hole as they may serve as a backstop, but the player objects. May the opponent or fellow-competitor remove the loose impediments behind the hole?

A. No. When it is the player's turn to play, his opponent or a fellow-competitor has no right to remove loose impediments affecting the player's play if the player requests the opponent or fellow-competitor not to do so. If the opponent or fellow-competitor ignores the request, he is in breach of Rule 1-2. In match play, the opponent loses the hole. In stroke play, the fellow-competitor incurs a penalty of two strokes and, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled to replace the loose impediments.

In the absence of a request not to remove loose impediments affecting the player's play, an opponent or fellow-competitor who does so incurs no penalty. In equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled to replace the loose impediments.

RENUMBERED DECISIONS [2]

Note that renumbered Decision 1-2/9 addresses a new set of circumstances and is in effect a new Decision with entirely new text and with the result that previous Decision 18-2a/6 is withdrawn.

2012

1-2/9 Player Presses Ball into Surface of Putting Green

Q. In replacing his ball but before putting it back into play, a player firmly presses the ball into the surface of the putting green in order to prevent it from being moved by the wind or gravity. What is the ruling?

A. In altering the surface of the putting green, the player has breached Rule 1-2 by intentionally taking action to influence the movement of a ball in play and to alter physical conditions that affect the playing of the hole.

In match play, the player loses the hole – Rule 1-2.

In stroke play, the player incurs a penalty of two strokes and must play the ball as it lies – Rule 1-2. (Revised – Formerly 18-2a/6)

2011

18-2a/6 Oscillating Ball Pressed into Surface of Putting Green

Q. A ball lying on the putting green was oscillating due to wind. The player firmly pressed the ball into the surface of the green and the ball stopped oscillating. The player then holed out. Was the player in breach of the Rules?

A. Yes. The player incurred a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a when he moved his ball by pressing on it. Since the original lie of the ball was altered when the ball was firmly pressed down, the player was obliged to proceed under Rule 20-3b. Since he did not do so, he lost the hole in match play and incurred a total penalty of two strokes in stroke play — see penalty statement under Rule 18.

1-2/10 Player Wraps Towel Around Self or Places Towel on Cactus Before Taking Stance

2012

Q. A player's ball lies near a cactus, and to play the ball, the player would have to stand with his legs touching the cactus. To protect himself from the cactus needles, the player wraps a towel around his legs before taking his stance. He then plays the ball. What is the ruling?

A. Provided the player does not breach Rule 13-2 (i.e., he takes his stance fairly), there is no breach of the Rules. However, if the player were to place the towel on the cactus, the player would be in breach of Rule 1-2 for altering physical conditions with the intent of affecting the playing of the hole; as a result, he would lose the hole in match play or incur a penalty of two strokes in stroke play. (Revised – Formerly 1-4/11.5)

2011

Q. A player's ball lies near a cactus, and to play the ball the player would have to stand with his legs touching the cactus. To protect himself from the cactus needles, the player wraps a towel around his legs before taking his stance. He then plays the ball. What is the ruling?

A. Provided the player does not breach Rule 13-2 (i.e., he takes his stance fairly), there is no breach of the Rules. However, if the player were to place the towel on the cactus, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play.

WITHDRAWN DECISIONS [6]

1-2/3.8 Player Jumps Close to Hole to Cause Ball to Drop; Ball Does Not Move

Q. A ball at rest overhangs the lip of the hole. The player jumps close to the hole in the hope of jarring the ground and causing the ball to fall into the hole. The ball does not move. What is the ruling?

A. There is no penalty. Rule 1-2 does not apply to a situation where the player takes an action that does not result in a change in the position of a ball at rest. If the ball had moved, see Decision 1-2/4.

1-2/4.5 Player Leaves Putt Short and Instinctively Throws Putter at Ball

Q. A player putts and the ball comes to rest just short of the hole. The player then instinctively throws his putter toward the ball, but misses. Should the player incur a penalty for a breach of Rule 1-2 which prohibits taking action to influence the position of a ball?

A. No. See Decision 14/6 which deals with a similar case.

If the putter had moved the ball, the player would have incurred a penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a, and would be required to replace the ball.

1-2/6 Player Removes Loose Impediment Affecting Lie of Opponent or Fellow-Competitor in Hazard

Q. As a gesture of sportsmanship, a player removes a loose impediment from a hazard, thus improving the lie in the hazard of the ball of his opponent or fellow-competitor. What is the ruling?

A. Under Rule 1-2, the player loses the hole in match play or incurs a penalty of two strokes in stroke play. The opponent or fellow-competitor is not required to replace the loose impediment.

14/6 Ball Popped Up Swung at in Disgust

Q. A player's ball is lying against a root. He makes a stroke and the ball pops up into the air. In disgust, he swings at it on the way down, but misses. Was the swing in disgust a stroke?

A. No. Such an instinctive swing in anger is not a stroke. Nor should the player be considered to have taken action to influence the movement of the ball in breach of Rule 1-2. However, if the player had struck the ball accidentally while it was in motion, he would have incurred a penalty of one stroke under Rule 19-2.

16-2/3 Casting Shadow on Ball Overhanging Hole

Q. A player's ball came to rest overhanging the edge of the hole. The player walked up to the hole and cast his shadow on the ball, believing that this would cause the grass to wilt and his ball to fall into the hole. Was the player in breach of Rule 1-2 (Exerting Influence on Ball) when he cast his shadow on the ball?

A. No.

24/16 Opponent or Fellow-Competitor Removes Obstruction Affecting Player's Play

Q. An opponent or a fellow-competitor removes an obstruction that affects the player's play. What is the ruling?

A. If the obstruction is movable, when it is the player's turn to play, his opponent or a fellow-competitor has no right to remove the movable obstruction affecting the player's play if the player requests the opponent or fellow-competitor not to do so (however, for a ball-marker, see Decision 20-1/11). If the opponent or fellow-competitor ignores the request, he is in breach of Rule 1-2. In match play, the opponent loses the hole. In stroke play, the fellow-competitor incurs a penalty of two strokes and, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled to replace the movable obstruction.

In the absence of a request not to remove the movable obstruction affecting the player's play, an opponent or fellow-competitor who does so incurs no penalty. In equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled to replace the movable obstruction.

If the obstruction is immovable, the opponent loses the hole, or the fellow-competitor incurs a two-stroke penalty (Rule 1-2). In equity (Rule 1-4), the player is entitled to replace the immovable obstruction.