

A WATCH LIST OF NUANCES [2010]

Besides the specific Definitions and Rules there are some underlying nuances of the Rules requiring sagacity and experience to fully appreciate or otherwise these nuances have the potential to cause great difficulties for a student of the Rules. Thus, he may think he has an understanding of some concept in the Rules and then discover that he has overlooked an essential part of a Definition or Rule because its relationship to another part was obscure. The watch list of nuances:

- **Interrelationships.** Many Rules and Definitions have internal or external interrelationships that are essential to the meaning of the item at hand. These nuances must be recognized, respected and understood.

Internally, a Note at the end of a Definition or Rule may completely change the meaning of the initial words [see Definition of Wrong Ball]. Within both Definitions and Rules, formally stated Exceptions may appear at the end but many times there are words in a sentence, such as “unless,” “provided,” or “otherwise,” that change the meaning of the preceding or succeeding words and serve the same purpose as a formal exception.

Externally, another Rule may supplement, complement or override a given Rule. For example, knowledge of Rule 20 as a supplement is essential to the execution of the relief Rules [24, 25, 26 and 28] as well as any other Rules that require placing or dropping of a ball.

- **Match play penalties require a claim.** In match play without a referee, an official is limited in his duties [USGA/34-3/100], thus there are no incurred penalties unless one of the players makes a claim to his opponent or the Committee [Rule 2-5]. Indeed, a player may overlook a violation [Decision 2-5/1] provided there is no agreement between the players. Thus, an infraction would not result in a penalty despite the plain language at the end of a given Rule associating a penalty for a breach of the Rule.
- **Intent-based Rules vs. results-based Rules.** There are several instances of intent-based Rules [see Rules 1-2 or 20-4] and results-based Rules [see Rules 11-4 or 13-2]. In the former, the intent of the players must be evaluated before application of a Rule. In the latter, the intent of the player is irrelevant as it is the results or the outcome of the player’s action that determines whether there is an infraction or not.

However, putting Rules into these two categories is not an absolute. There is an instance of the intent-based Rule 20-4 resulting in a ball not being in play even though the player dropped a ball with the specific intent of putting the ball into play [Decision 15/11].

Even a Rule that is not fundamentally either intent-based or results-based may be applied to situations where the intent of the player is crucial [see Decisions 16-1a/12, 33-7/8]. It is not enough to know the underlying principle of a Rule; the supporting Decisions must be known to properly apply the Rule.

- **Being unaware sometimes results in no penalty to the player.** This concept is not stated anywhere within the Rules but is frequently cited within a specific Decision as a reason not to penalize a player [see Decisions 13-2/4.5, 15/10, 18-1/3, 19-2/6]. However, this concept may not be depended on as a general principle to absolve the player in any specific instance [see Decisions 9-2/10, 25-1b/26, 33-7/4.5].
- **Difference between “playing a ball” and “putting a ball into play.”** The phrase, “playing a ball,” when cited in the Rules means making a stroke at a ball. If this is the first stroke from the teeing ground, then this action puts the ball into play. However, in a general sense, prior to properly playing a ball, the ball must be put into play by placing or dropping [Rule 20-4].

Understanding this difference is essential to evaluating a given situation. For example, if a player substitutes a ball when not permitted [Rule 15-2] or drops a ball in an improper manner [Rule 20-2a] and in a wrong place [Rule 20-7], there is no penalty until the player plays the ball. Thus, when correcting these mistakes according to the provisions of Rule 20-6, when it says “but not played,” this means that a stroke has not been made at the ball.