

Rule Tips of the Week

Incidentally

Junior golf is alive and well in New Mexico! Case in point: The “Shootout In The Desert,” the annual invitational event held at the Canyon Club in Albuquerque featuring the top high school golf teams from the “Land of Enchantment.” The 2018 edition featured 10 boys teams (47 players) and 12 girls teams (55 players). Bowen Davis of Manzano High School was medalist for the boys shooting a 4-under par 68, and Cleveland High School’s Jacque Galloway was medalist for the girls with a two-over par 74.



During this 18-hole tournament, Rules Officials used “Incident Reports” to record their interactions with the players. While the occasional viewer of televised golf events might erroneously conclude that Rules Officials only penalize players, the more than 60 incident reports from this tournament clearly demonstrate that Rules Officials are there to help the players get around the course with the least amount of stress. The following summary of interactions illustrates the many different ways that Rules Officials assisted the players during this event:

- On ten different occasions, Rules Officials assisted players searching for their balls. On six occasions, and to help with pace of play, Rules Officials transported the players back to where they had previously played after it was determined that the ball in question was either lost or out of bounds.
- Rules Officials needed to sight from stake-to-stake on three occasions to verify that the players’ balls were, in fact, out of bounds. Per the Definition of “Out of Bounds,” a ball is out of bounds when all of it lies out of bounds.
- At the par-3 6th hole, on eight occasions, Rules Officials assisted players in taking relief from the water hazard/lateral water hazard. On one occasion, when the player dropped within two club-lengths of the estimated point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the hazard, the ball bounced forward and came to rest nearer to the hole than the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the hazard. Thus, per Rule 20-2c(vii)(c) [When to Re-Drop], the Rules Official supervised the player re-dropping the ball.
- Players sought help with potentially unplayable balls on eight different occasions. After the Rules Officials reviewed the relief options with the players, some players elected to take relief while others decided to try to play the ball as it lay and avoid the one-stroke penalty associated with taking relief under Rule 28 [Ball Unplayable]. As shown in the adjacent photograph looking in the direction of the hole, one girl’s ball ended up in a hollow under a native pinon tree. After the Rules Official went through her Rule 28 options, she realized that if she dropped either within two club-lengths or on the line extending from the hole behind where her ball lay, the dropped ball would very likely return under the tree. She therefore decided to play the ball as it lay. When she announced her intention to do so, the attending Rules Official showed her how to fairly take her stance within the low-hanging branches and reminded her to avoid taking any practice swings that might improve the area of her intended swing. See Rule 13-2 [Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play] and Decision 13-2/1 [Explanation of “Fairly Taking His Stance”].
- One group of players were confused about what to do after one player’s ball at rest on the putting green was struck by the ball of another player who had just putted from the putting green. Per Rule 19-5a [Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped by Another Ball at Rest], the attending Rules Official advised that the ball at rest needed to be replaced without penalty, and the player who had putted the ball incurred a two-stroke penalty and must play her ball from where it came to rest.
- One player needed assistance in determining the nearest point of relief from an area of casual water per Rule 25 [Abnormal Ground Conditions].
- One Rules Official encountered a player shortly after he had picked up his original ball in bounds and was walking over to play his provisional ball in the fairway. The Rules Official advised the player that he needed to abandon the provisional ball and replace his original ball with a one-stroke penalty pursuant to Rule 18-2 [Ball at Rest Moved by Player ...]. In all likelihood, this Rules Official prevented the player from being disqualified! Had the player played the provisional ball, he would have played a wrong ball. Playing a wrong ball is a “must correct” situation, and if the player had played a ball from the next teeing ground without correcting that mistake, he would have been disqualified. See 15-3b [Wrong Ball: Stroke Play] and Rule 27-2c [When Provisional Ball to be Abandoned].
- On nine different occasions, players sought help in taking relief from various immovable obstructions, such as cart paths and electrical control boxes. One Rules Official encountered a player who had just dropped within two club-lengths of the nearest point of relief from a cart path. The Rules Official advised the player that he should have dropped within one club-length of the nearest point of relief, but that he was permitted to correct his mistake without penalty since he had not yet played the ball dropped in a wrong place. See Rule 24-2 [Immovable Obstruction] and Rule 20-6 [Lifting Ball Incorrectly Substituted, Dropped or Placed]. As shown in the adjacent photograph, one player sought relief from a permanent protective fence behind the teeing ground of the 13th hole because the fence intervened on his line of play to the 12th hole. The attending Rules Official had to deny relief because this immovable obstruction did not interfere with the lie of the ball, the player’s stance or area of intended swing. Refer again to Rule 24-2.
- The pace of play of one particular group was found to be noticeably behind time par upon completing its first hole. Thereafter, a Rules Official shepherded this group over the next nine holes until they were back in position. Along the way, this Rules Official went above and beyond the call of duty by offering various tips to those less-experienced players in order to assist them in improving their pace of play.