

Rule Tip of the Week Paper or Plastic?

Neither, actually! The subject matter of this article is *golf* bags and where they show up in the Rules and Decisions. Unlike the detailed specifications covering clubs, as found in Appendix II [Design of Clubs], and balls, as found in Appendix III [The Ball], there are no specifications covering the design or manufacture of golf bags. Thus, the humongous golf bag that Al Czervik (aka Rodney Dangerfield) brought to the Bushwood Country Club in the movie *Caddyshack* was perfectly legal!



Section 1 [Etiquette; Behavior on the Course] of the Rules states, in part, “*Players should ensure that no damage is done to the putting green when putting down bags or the flagstick.*”

The words “*golf bag*” do not appear in the Definition of Equipment, but a golf bag most certainly meets the Definition which states, in part, ““*Equipment*” is anything used, worn, held or carried by the player or the player’s caddie....”

Decision 1-2/2 [Shielding Line of Putt from Wind] points out that it is a breach of Rule 1-2 [Exerting Influence on Movement of Ball or Altering Physical Conditions] to intentionally place your golf bag parallel to the line of putt in order to shield the line of putt from the wind. Such an action taken with the intent to influence the movement of the ball would be a breach of Rule 1-2, even if you removed the golf bag prior to making your next stroke.

Decision 4-4a/4 [Partners’ Clubs Carried in One Bag] advises that partners in a foursome competition may put both sets of clubs in one golf bag, provided each player uses only his clubs. In these circumstances, in order to ensure that neither player uses his partner’s clubs by mistake, each player’s clubs need to be clearly identifiable.

Decision 4-4a/5 [Competitor Inadvertently Uses and Thereafter Carries Fellow-Competitor’s Club] highlights the danger of playing with someone who uses the same model of clubs and has a similar golf bag. If you reached into the wrong golf bag, and inadvertently used one of your fellow-competitor’s clubs to make a stroke, you would be penalized two strokes per Rule 4-4a [Selection and Addition of Clubs] for using a club selected for play by another person playing the course. Upon discovery of the breach, you would be required to immediately declare that club out of play per Rule 4-4c [Excess Club Declared Out of Play]. If discovery of the breach was delayed for a number of holes, you would not be penalized for carrying the extra club because you never had the intention of adding that particular club to those that you had selected for the round.

Decision 8-1/10 [Looking into Another Player’s Bag to Determine Club Used] states that, “*Information obtained by observation is not advice.*” Thus, it is not a breach of Rule 8-1 [Advice] to look into another player’s golf bag to determine which club that player selected for his last stroke. On the other hand, Decision 8-1/11 [Removing Towel Covering Another Player’s Clubs to Determine Club Used] points out that, if you remove a towel covering another player’s golf bag in order to determine which club the other player had selected, the physical act of removing the towel would be equivalent of asking for advice and you would be in breach of Rule 8-1.

According to Decision 14-2/2.5 [Player Positions Bag for Purpose of Providing Shade for Ball], it is a breach of Rule 14-2a [Physical Assistance and Protection from the Elements], to make a stroke after having intentionally left your golf bag in a position to block the sunlight from your ball.

Decision 19-2/7 [Ball Strikes Player’s Golf Bag and Then His Caddie] indicates that if your ball ricochets off your golf bag and it then strikes your caddie, you are only penalized one stroke under Rule 19-2 [Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped by Player, Partner, Caddie or Equipment]. As a single act resulted in one Rule being breached more than once, a single penalty applies per Principle 1 in Decision 1-4/12 [Player Breaches Rules More Than Once Prior to Stroke; Whether Multiple Penalties Should Be Applied].

Finally, for those of you wondering if either paper or plastic bags show up anywhere in the Decisions, check out Decision 18-1/7 [Ball in Plastic Bag Moves When Bag Blown to New Position by Wind]! According to this Decision, if a player’s ball comes to rest inside a plastic bag and, subsequently, the wind moves the bag so the ball ends up in a new position, the plastic bag that has been moved by the wind is considered to be an outside agency! Thus, in taking relief pursuant to Rules 18-1 [Ball at Rest Moved by Outside Agency] and 24-1b [Movable Obstruction], the player must drop the ball directly under the place where it originally lay in the bag.