

Rule Tip of the Week Club Med!

Sorry to disappoint, but this is not an article about where to book your next vacation at one of Club Med's all-inclusive holiday resorts. Instead, it is a brief review about what, if any, "medical" attention may be given to a club should it become damaged during a round. The relevant prescription for repairing or replacing a damaged club is found in Rule 4-3a [Damaged Clubs; Repair and Replacement: Damage in Normal Course of Play]:

If, during a stipulated round, a player's club is damaged in the normal course of play, he may:

- (i) use the club in its damaged state for the remainder of the stipulated round; or*
- (ii) without unduly delaying play, repair it or have it repaired; or*
- (iii) as an additional option available only if the club is unfit for play, replace the damaged club with any club. The replacement of a club must not unduly delay play (Rule 6-7) and must not be made by borrowing any club selected for play by any other person playing on the course or by assembling components carried by the player during the stipulated round.*

Note: A club is unfit for play if it is substantially damaged, e.g., the shaft is dented, significantly bent or breaks into pieces; the clubhead becomes loose, detached or significantly deformed; or the grip becomes loose. A club is not unfit for play solely because the club's lie or loft has been altered, or the clubhead is scratched.

Rule 4-3a authorizes the repair or replacement of a damaged club **only** if it was damaged in the "normal course of play." Decision 4-3/1 [Meaning of Damage Sustained in "Normal Course of Play"], advises that this phrase is intended to cover all reasonable acts, but not cases of abuse, and elaborates with the following:

In addition to making a stroke, practice swing or practice stroke, examples of acts that are in the "normal course of play" include the following:

- removing or replacing a club in the bag;*
- using a club to search for or retrieve a ball (except by throwing the club);*
- leaning on a club while waiting to play, teeing a ball or retrieving a ball from the hole; or*
- accidentally dropping a club.*

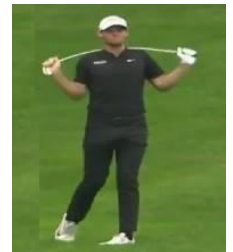
[The adjacent photograph shows Ernie Els snapping his 4-iron during the 2015 Valspar Championship. This is an example of a club being damaged during the "normal course of play.":]



Examples of acts that are not in the "normal course of play" include the following:

- throwing a club whether in anger, in retrieving a ball, or otherwise;*
- "slamming" a club into a bag; or*
- intentionally striking something (e.g., the ground or a tree) with the club other than during a stroke, practice swing or practice stroke.*

[The adjacent photograph shows Thomas Pieters about to snap his 9-iron around his neck after a poor shot at the 2018 BMW Championship. This is an example of a club being damaged other than in the "normal course of play."]



According to Decision 4-3/2 [Meaning of "Repair"], "The term "repair" in Rule 4-3a(ii) means to restore the club, as nearly as possible, to its condition prior to the incident that caused the damage. In so doing, the player is limited to the grip, shaft and clubhead used to comprise the club at the beginning of the stipulated round or, in the case of a club later added, when the club was selected for play.

When a club is damaged to the extent that the grip, shaft or clubhead has to be changed, this change exceeds what is meant by the term "repair." Such action constitutes replacement and is only permitted if the club was "unfit for play" – see Rule 4-3a(iii)."