

July Rules Quiz

2018

The scenarios in this month's quiz are not hypotheticals! They actually occurred this past week at the Carnoustie Golf Links in Carnoustie, Scotland during the 147th edition of The Open. See if you would have made the correct rulings for these particular competitors contending for the Claret Jug.



1. During the first round, after Emiliano Grillo marked and lifted his ball on the 4th putting green, he tapped down his ball-marker with the sole of his putter. Shortly thereafter, he discovered that his ball-marker was adhering to the bottom of his putter! What is the ruling? (a) Without penalty, Grillo must replace his ball or his ball-marker as near as possible to where his ball or ball-marker was positioned prior to the marking or lifting of his ball. (b) Grillo incurs a one-stroke penalty for moving his ball-marker. (c) Grillo incurs a two-stroke penalty for moving his ball marker. (d) Since the spot from which the ball-marker was moved can only be estimated, Grillo must drop his ball as near as possible to that spot.
2. During the second round, the ball of Matt Wallace came to rest on the fringe of the 13th hole. Subsequently, one of his fellow-competitors, Padraig Harrington, played from a greenside bunker causing sand to be deposited around Wallace's ball. What is the ruling? (a) Wallace may remove only the sand that was deposited on the putting green. (b) Wallace must drop the ball within one club-length of, and no nearer the hole than, the nearest point of relief. (c) Wallace may brush away the sand around his ball provided he does not cause his ball to move. (d) Wallace may mark and lift his ball and clean the sand from his ball, in addition to removing any of the sand deposited on the fringe or the putting green by Harrington's bunker shot.
3. The 4th and 14th holes at Carnoustie share a common putting green that is nearly 80 yards long! During the third round, Thomas Pieters approach shot on the 4th hole came to rest on the double green so far away from the hole that he asked if he could use a club other than his putter to play his next stroke from the putting green. What is the ruling? (a) Pieters was required to use his putter since his ball was on the putting green. (b) Pieters could use an iron to pitch or chip his ball on the putting green provided he could do so without damaging the putting green. (c) Pieters could leave the flagstick in the hole only if he decided to use an iron to pitch or chip his ball on the putting green. (d) Pieters was on a wrong putting green and was required to take relief by dropping off the putting green. (e) None of the above.

Answers:

1. (a) *According to Rule 20-1 [Lifting and Marking], if a ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved in the process of lifting the ball or marking its position, the ball or ball-marker must be replaced. Moreover, there is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball or ball-marker is directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball. Decision 20-1/6 [Ball-Marker Moved Accidentally by Player in Process of Marking Position of Ball] precisely addresses Grillo's situation wherein the ball-marker stuck to the bottom of his putter. Decision 20-1/6 points out that the movement of the ball-marker was directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of the ball.*
2. (d) *According to the Definition of "Loose Impediments," sand and loose soil are loose impediments on the putting green, but not elsewhere. Rule 13-2 [Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play] states, in part, "A player must not improve ... the position or lie of his ball, the area of his intended stance or swing, [or] his line of play ... by ... removing or pressing down sand ..." Nevertheless, according to Decision 13-2/8.5 [Player's Lie Affected by Sand from Partner's, Opponent's or Fellow-Competitor's Stroke from Bunker], Wallace was entitled to the lie and line of play that he had when his ball came to rest. Therefore, in equity per Rule 1-4, he was entitled to remove the sand deposited by Harrington's stroke, in addition to cleaning his ball after marking and lifting it, all without penalty.*
3. (e) *Pieters' ball did not come to rest on a wrong putting green, even though it was far closer to the 14th hole than the 4th hole. The Definition of "Putting Green" points out that the putting green is all ground of the hole being played that is specifically prepared for putting. See also Decision 25-3/1 [Status of Double Green Serving Hole Not Being Played] which points out that part of a double green can be a wrong putting green only if the Committee divides the green by use of stakes or a line, declaring one part to be the green for one hole, and the other part to be the green for the other hole. This was not done at Carnoustie.*

There is nothing in the Rules that requires a player to use a putter on the putting green. Rule 1-1 [General] states, "The Game of Golf consists of a playing a ball with a club from the teeing ground into the hole by a stroke or successive strokes in accordance with the Rules." Note that this Rule does not dictate the use of any particular club anywhere between the teeing ground and the hole. Also note that, although Pieters did not damage the putting green by using an iron to chip his ball towards the 4th hole, there is nothing in the Rules that penalizes a player for damaging a putting green in the course of making a stroke from the putting green.

There is nothing in the Rules that prohibits a player from leaving the flagstick in the hole when playing a stroke from the putting green or elsewhere. However, a player risks incurring a penalty should his or her ball strike the flagstick in the hole when the stroke was made from the putting green. Rule 17-3 [Ball Striking Flagstick or Attendant] states, in part, "The player's ball must not strike ... the flagstick in the hole, unattended, when the stroke has been made on the putting green."