

Rule Tip of the Week Lexi's Lapse

During the third round of the 2018 Indy Women in Tech Championship at the Brickyard Crossing Golf Course in Speedway, Indiana, Lexi Thompson had a mental lapse on the par-5 10th hole that cost her a birdie. Her wayward drive ended up in the fairway of the 6th hole where she marked and lifted her ball forgetting that a temporary Local Rule allowing “preferred lies” applied only when her ball was in her own fairway.



Per Rule 33-8 [Local Rules], the LPGA has the authority to establish Local Rules for local abnormal conditions if they are consistent with the policy set forth in Appendix I [Local Rules; Conditions of Competition]. One of the specimen Local Rules found in Appendix I concerns “Preferred Lies.” As noted in Appendix I, Part A.3.b, such a Local Rule is warranted when adverse conditions, such as heavy snows, spring thaws, prolonged rains or extreme heat are prevalent throughout the course, making fairways unsatisfactory.

With the course receiving over an inch of rain, the LPGA adopted a Local Rule for preferred lies similar to the following:

A ball lying on a closely-mown area of the hole being played may be lifted without penalty and cleaned. Before lifting the ball, the player must mark its position. Having lifted the ball, she must place it on a spot within one club-length of and not nearer the hole than where it originally lay, that is not in a hazard and not on a putting green.

A player may place her ball only once, and it is in play when it has been placed (Rule 20-4 [When Ball Dropped, Placed or Replaced Is in Play]). If the ball fails to come to rest on the spot on which it was placed, Rule 20-3d [Ball Fails to Come to Rest on Spot] applies. If the ball when placed comes to rest on the spot on which it is placed and it subsequently moves, there is no penalty and the ball must be played as it lies, unless the provisions of any other Rule apply.

If the player fails to mark the position of the ball before lifting it, moves the ball-marker prior to putting the ball back into play or moves the ball in any other manner, such as rolling it with a club, she incurs a penalty of one stroke.

Note: “Closely-mown area” means any area of the course, including paths through the rough, cut to fairway height or less.

PENALTY FOR BREACH OF LOCAL RULE: Stroke play – Two strokes.

Fortunately for Lexi, a Rules Official was in the vicinity of the 6th fairway and observed Lexi as she preferred her lie, placing her ball within one club-length of where it came to rest. Before she had the opportunity to play her next stroke, the Rules Official had time to reach her and remind her that she could only prefer her lie if her ball had come to rest in the fairway of the hole being played, i.e., the fairway of the 10th hole. Having lifted her ball in play without authority, Lexi was subject to a one-stroke penalty pursuant to Rule 18-2 [Ball at Rest Moved by Player, Partner, Caddie or Equipment] and was required to replace her ball. Had the Rules Official not intervened before Lexi played her next stroke from a wrong place, she would have incurred the two-stroke penalty for a breach of the Local Rule!

After replacing her ball with the assistance of the Rules Official, Lexi smacked a fairway wood from 215 yards onto the green and two-putted from 50 feet. Lexi’s lapse wiped out a “*woulda-shoulda-coulda*” birdie, but her talent converted it into a “*ho-hum*” par.