

# Rule Tip of the Week

## 2018 Now & Then 2019

Recently, a PGA professional was conducting a chipping lesson, during which one of the student's chips ended up resting against the flagstick in the hole. The PGA professional, recognizing this situation as a teachable moment on the Rules, immediately asked the student, "Is that ball holed?" When the student answered, "Not yet," the PGA professional replied "Great answer ... and for multiple reasons!"

**The "Not yet" answer is correct with regard to the "Now" Rules given that the present Definition of "Holed" states, "A ball is "holed" when it is at rest within the circumference of the hole and all of it is below the level of the hole."**

In addition to this Definition of "Holed," currently Rule 17-4 [Ball Resting Against Flagstick] applies to this scenario, and here is what this Rules says:

*When a player's ball rests against the flagstick in the hole and the ball is not holed, the player or another person authorized by him may move or remove the flagstick, and if the ball falls into the hole, the player is deemed to have holed out with his last stroke; otherwise, the ball if moved, must be placed on the lip of the hole, without penalty.*

**The "Not yet" answer is also correct with respect to the forthcoming "Then" Rules because the ball in this specific scenario will be considered holed beginning in 2019!**

As of January 1, 2019, when a ball comes to rest against the flagstick in the hole, the ball will be considered holed so long as some part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green! Rule 13.2c [Ball Resting Against Flagstick in Hole] will be the applicable Rule, reading as follows:

*If a player's ball comes to rest against the flagstick left in the hole:*

- *If any part of the ball is in the hole below the surface of the putting green, the ball is treated as holed even if the entire ball is not below the surface.*
- *If no part of the ball is in the hole below the surface of the putting green:*
  - *The ball is not holed and must be played as it lies.*
  - *If the flagstick is removed and the ball moves (whether it falls into the hole or moves away from the hole), there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced on the lip of the hole (see Rule 14.2)*

Consistent with new Rule 13.2c is the forthcoming changed Definition of "Holed." Take particular note of the final sentence in this Definition:

*When a ball is at rest in the hole after a stroke and the entire ball is below the surface of the putting green.*

*When the Rules refer to "holing out" or "hole out," it means when the player's ball is holed.*

*For the special case of a ball resting against the flagstick in the hole, see Rule 13.2c (ball is treated as holed if any part of the ball is below the surface of the putting green).*

The adjacent photograph illustrates a ball resting against the flagstick in the hole. Please note that, according to new Rule 13.2c, this ball is not holed because no part of this ball is below the surface of the putting green! Just because a ball may be resting against the flagstick does not necessarily mean that the ball is holed under the forthcoming Rules.

Finally, note that this scenario of a ball coming to rest against the flagstick in the hole after January 1, 2019 may be more of a probability, than a mere possibility. Why? Because, starting next year, you will be able to leave the flagstick in the hole when you putt! Check out the forthcoming Rule 13.2a [Leaving Flagstick in Hole] which states, in part:

*(1) Player May Leave Flagstick in Hole. The player may make a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole, so that it is possible for the ball in motion to hit the flagstick.*

*The player must decide this before making the stroke, by either:*

- *Leaving the flagstick where it is in the hole or moving it so that it is centered in the hole and leaving it there, or*
- *Having a removed flagstick put back in the hole.*

*In either case:*

- *The player must not try to gain an advantage by deliberately moving the flagstick to a position other than centered in the hole.*
- *If the player does so and the ball in motion then hits the flagstick, he or she gets the general penalty.*

*(2) No Penalty If Ball Hits Flagstick Left in Hole. If the player makes a stroke with the flagstick left in the hole and the ball in motion then hits the flagstick:*

- *There is no penalty (except as provided in (1)), and*
- *The ball must be played as it lies.*

