

Rule Tip of the Week Chairful?

While playing the 4th hole during the final round of the 2019 Farmers Insurance Open at the Torrey Pines Golf Course, Adam Scott's drive drifted left and might have tumbled down the side of the cliff bordering that side of the hole had it not been caught by a volunteer's chair, i.e., a movable obstruction. Fortunately for Scott, a Rules Official was on hand to "chairfully" guide Scott through the relief procedures for a ball that has come to rest on a movable obstruction, thereby enabling Scott to play his next stroke without having to take relief from the penalty area.

Had this situation occurred a few weeks ago, very likely Scott would have been left with a shot blocked by the bushes along with a possible awkward stance near the edge of the cliff! Per old Rule 24-1b [Movable Obstruction], after removing the chair, Scott would have dropped the original ball "as near as possible to the spot directly under the place where the ball lay ... on the obstruction, but not nearer the hole." And, per old Rule 20-2a [Dropping and Re-Dropping], Scott would have dropped the ball from shoulder height. Given the fact that the ground in the area of the chair slopes toward the cliff, a ball dropped from shoulder height would most likely have come to rest tucked behind a group of bushes within the red penalty area.

The adjacent images, courtesy of NBC Golf, illustrate the sequence of events associated with the relief procedures followed by Scott in accordance with the new Rules for 2019. The first image is an aerial view showing the cliff running along the left side of the 4th hole. The second picture shows Scott's ball as it came to rest on the seat of the volunteer's chair. In the next photograph, Scott is seen "chairfully" placing a tee on the estimated point right under where his original ball came to rest on the seat of the chair. In the fourth image, Scott is picking up that tee after successfully dropping a ball within the allowable relief area. The last photograph shows Scott about to play his approach shot to the 4th green.



Under new Rule 15.2a(2) [Relief When Ball Is in or on Movable Obstruction Anywhere on Course Except on Putting Green], Scott was able to drop a ball within a relief area extending one driver-length from, but not nearer the hole than, the estimated point right under where his original ball came to rest on the seat of the chair. This Rule reads as follows:

"The player may take free relief by lifting the ball, removing the movable obstruction and dropping the original ball or another ball in this relief area (see Rule 14.3):

- **Reference Point:** The estimated point right under where the ball was at rest in or on the movable obstruction.
- **Size of Relief Area Measured from Reference Point:** One club-length, but with these limits:
- **Limits on Location of Relief Area:**
 - » Must be in the same area of the course as the reference point, and
 - » Must not be nearer the hole than the reference point."



By "chairfully" following this Rule, Scott was able to drop on a patch of grass relatively close to the marked edge of the red penalty area. By the way, Scott did not have to worry too much about seeing his dropped ball roll down the slope toward the bushes and the cliff. Why? Because under new Rule 14.3b [Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way], Scott was required to drop a ball from knee height, rather than shoulder height. Under the "chairful" direction of the Rules Official, Scott ended up with a playable lie, albeit within the penalty area, and went on to par the hole.

One final note is that, under the new Rules, Scott was able to make practice swings and ground his club within the penalty area prior to making his next stroke from within the penalty area.

