

# Rule Tip **April Fools!** 2019 **the week**

April Fools' Day began around 1582 when the Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar. Back then, those who forgot that there was a new calendar and attempted to celebrate New Year's (formerly celebrated on April 1<sup>st</sup>) on the wrong day were teased as "April fools." Nowadays, we recognize April 1<sup>st</sup> as the day reserved for playing practical jokes on others. As illustrated by the adjacent photograph, a classic April fools prank on the golf course is tricking someone into making a swing at an exploding golf ball.



Pranks on the golf course aside, it is foolish for someone to even think about playing a competitive round of golf without knowing the Rules. As noted in Rule 1 [The Game, Player Conduct and the Rules], one of the central principles of the game is for the player to play by the Rules. This article highlights just a few of the foolish mistakes that can be made by golfers who are ignorant of the Rules pertaining to stroke play.

In taking relief from a sprinkler head (i.e., an abnormal course condition) in the fairway, Player A forgot about the Rules changes for 2019, and dropped the ball from shoulder height within one club-length of, and no nearer the hole than, the nearest point of complete relief. Without correcting the mistake, Player A then played the ball from where the dropped ball came to rest.

*According to Rule 16.1b [Relief for Ball in General Area], when taking relief from an abnormal course condition, the relief area must be in the general area and must not be nearer the hole than the reference point, which is the nearest point of complete relief in the general area. So far so good. However, by dropping from shoulder height, Player A did not drop in the right way. He should have dropped a ball from knee height according to Rule 14.3b [Ball Must Be Dropped in Right Way]. Per Rule 14.3b(3) [Ball Must Be Dropped in Relief Area], Player A is penalized since he or she did not drop in the right way before making a stroke at the ball from where it came to rest after being dropped in the wrong way. If the ball was played from the relief area, Player A would be penalized one stroke. If the ball was played from outside the relief area, Player A would incur a two-stroke penalty.*

Player B, also taking relief from a sprinkler head in the general area, correctly drops a ball from knee height. However, before the ball strikes the ground in the relief area, the ball glances off the shoe of the player. Thinking he or she proceeded correctly given that the ball ended up within the relief area, Player B then played the ball from where it came to rest in the relief area.

*According to Rule 14.3b, dropping a ball in the right way means that (i) the ball must be dropped only by the player; (2) the ball must be dropped from knee height; (3) the ball falls straight down, without the player throwing, spinning or rolling it or using any other motion that might affect where the ball will come to rest; and (4) the ball does not touch any part of the player's body or equipment before it hits the ground. Since the ball struck Player B's shoe before it struck the ground, Player B did not drop the ball in the right way. Per Rule 14.3b(3), Player B incurs one penalty stroke for playing the ball from the relief area without first correcting the mistake of dropping in a wrong way.*

Player C, also taking relief from a sprinkler head in the general area, drops a ball in the right way in the prescribed relief area, but the ball glances off his or her shoe after it strikes the ground. Even though the ball comes to rest within the relief area, Player C believes that the ball must be re-dropped since it bounced off his or her shoe. Player C then picks up the ball and drops it again in the right way in the relief area and without the ball striking his or her body or equipment, and then plays the ball from where it came to rest in the relief area.

*According to Rule 14.3c(1) [Player Has Completed Taking Relief When Ball Dropped in Right Way Comes to Rest in Relief Area], it does not matter whether the ball, after hitting the ground, touches any person, equipment or other outside influence before coming to rest within the relief area. Thus, Player C should have played the ball from where it came to rest within the relief area. When Player C lifted the ball, he or she did so without authority under the Rules and was required to replace the ball. See Rule 9.4 [Ball Lifted or Moved by Player]. Whether this fool receives one penalty stroke or two penalty strokes depends upon whether or not the dropped ball ends up on the same spot from which Player C lifted the ball. Interpretation Rule 14.2b(2)/1 [Player Drops Ball When Ball Is to Be Replaced] states, in part, "When a player drops a ball when the Rules require him or her to replace the ball, the ball has been replaced in a wrong way. If the player replaces the ball in a wrong way, but on the required spot (this includes if the player drops the ball and it comes to rest on the required spot), he or she gets one penalty stroke if the ball is played without correcting the mistake .... But if the player has dropped a ball and that ball comes to rest somewhere other than on the required spot, he or she gets the general penalty for playing from a wrong place if the ball is played without correcting the mistake."*