

Rakes - In or Out?

BY BRENT MCLAUGHLIN, RCGA DIRECTOR OF COMPETITIONS, RULES AND AMATEUR STATUS



We've all asked the question. We've all debated the pros and cons. We've all cheered when the bounce was good and cursed when one went against us. So what is the answer to this age-old question? Should rakes be left in or out of bunkers? I get this question a lot from golf professionals, club captains, greens committee chairs, superintendents and everyday players. Everyone wants to know. So which is it - in or out? What if I said it was up to you?

Although rakes are covered under Rule 24-1 (movable obstructions) there is no rule that mandates where they must be placed. That means if your club has cleverly attached those stickers that say "leave rakes in bunker" they are not doing anything wrong. Conversely if your club believes that rakes are better suited outside, then that's OK too.

The reality is there's no right answer. Confusing? A little. Thankfully, in situations that need clarification we can always turn to the Decisions book. Decision - Misc./2 provides comment and direction on the oft-asked question of rakes in bunkers. This decision is rooted in the belief that there is less likelihood of an ad-

vantage (or disadvantage) to a player if the rake remains outside the bunker.

When the committee requests that rakes be left in bunkers, most players tend to leave them to the side where they exit the bunker. This spot (usually about a foot or so inside the lip) becomes the perfect location to stop a ball from continuing its path and rolling into the flat part. The end result is likely to be a much more difficult shot than would otherwise have been the case had the rake not been there.

When a ball comes to rest on or against a rake in the bunker and the player must proceed under Rule 24-1 (movable obstructions), it may not be possible to replace the ball on the same spot

RULE THE GAME

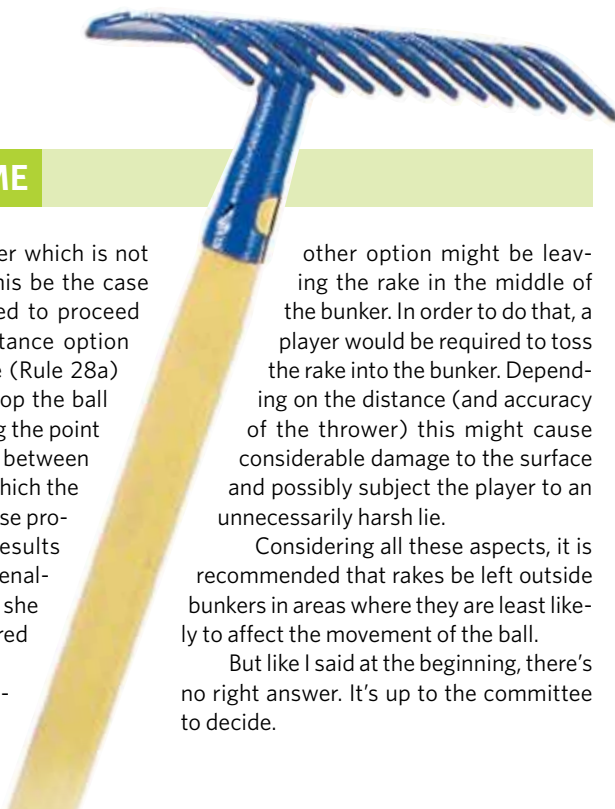
or find a spot in the bunker which is not nearer the hole. Should this be the case the player would be forced to proceed under the stroke-and-distance option of the unplayable ball rule (Rule 28a) or, in equity (Rule 1-4), drop the ball outside the bunker, keeping the point where the ball lay directly between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped. In either case proceeding in this manner results in the player receiving a penalty stroke – a penalty he or she likely would not have incurred if the rake were not there.

To avoid the above-mentioned problem, an-

other option might be leaving the rake in the middle of the bunker. In order to do that, a player would be required to toss the rake into the bunker. Depending on the distance (and accuracy of the thrower) this might cause considerable damage to the surface and possibly subject the player to an unnecessarily harsh lie.

Considering all these aspects, it is recommended that rakes be left outside bunkers in areas where they are least likely to affect the movement of the ball.

But like I said at the beginning, there's no right answer. It's up to the committee to decide.



HANDICAP HELP

Lessons learned

BY NANCY BAIN

A recent handicap article in our club's monthly newsletter caused quite a stir and debunked two commonly held myths: The first was that no one reads articles about handicaps, a fallacy made self-evident by the ensuing commotion. The second myth was a technical issue arising from the question "Is there such a thing as a practice round?" (translation: do I have to post this score?). The article affirmed the score must be posted. The real uproar, however, was over the author's instructions on how to count strokes when a second "practice" ball has been dropped.

"The Rules of Golf are clear," says Mary Adams, author of the article in question. "When a hole isn't played according to the rules, the score recorded for that hole is par plus the player's handicap

strokes for that hole."

Members of our club's handicap committee howled at this assertion. They said the proper way to score in this situation is to use the player's equitable strokes for the hole. Both sides of the discussion went to their experts. The dissenters consulted the B.C. Golf Association and Adams sent her article to the RCGA for review. In response, the experts cited the RCGA Handicap Manual, Section 4-2 in part:

"If a player does not play a hole or plays it other than under The Rules of Golf (except for preferred lies), the score recorded for that hole for handicap purposes must be par plus any handicap strokes the player is entitled to receive on that hole."

The handicap committee members graciously conceded that Adams' ar-

ticle was correct and even elected her chair of the committee in subsequent years. For Adams though, the dispute's resolution was far more important than being proved correct.

"When a dispute is unresolved, it festers – sometimes for years," she says. "Players will avoid discussions about rules because they have seen confrontation and unpleasantness aroused. It's important to ask the questions and discover the answers so that learning can replace disputing."

Rules and handicap expertise is always just a mouse click away thanks to the RCGA's "Ask an Expert" service. Click on the Rules of Golf tab, located in both the recreational and competitive sections at www.rcga.org, to learn more.

1. A player's ball lies in a bunker against a rake. After marking the position of the ball, he lifts the rake and the ball rolls closer to the hole. He tries to replace the ball but it will not remain at rest. He attempts to place the ball at rest as near as possible to where it lay within the bunker, but not nearer the hole. The ball still will not remain at rest. What is the ruling?

- A He may attempt to place the ball at the nearest spot, even if nearer the hole, where it will remain at rest.
- B He may lightly press the ball into the sand at the nearest spot not nearer the hole.
- C He must drop the ball outside the bunker with a one-stroke penalty.
- D He may drop the ball outside the bunker under no penalty.

2. In stroke play, a player attempts to play his ball out of a bunker. He fails to extricate the ball from the bunker and, in anger, slams his club into the sand. What is the ruling?

- A The player incurs no penalty.
- B The player incurs a one-stroke penalty.
- C The player incurs a two-stroke penalty.
- D The player is disqualified for a serious breach of etiquette.

3. In match play a player's ball lies in a bunker. Upon entering the bunker the player takes a rake and sticks the handle into the sand. What is the ruling?

- A The player incurs no penalty
- B The player incurs a one-stroke penalty
- C The player incurs a two-stroke penalty
- D The player loses the hole

4. In stroke play, there is a bunker between a competitor's ball and the hole. Before playing, the competitor smoothes footprints and other irregularities of surface in the bunker on his line of play. What is the ruling?

- A There is no penalty.
- B The competitor incurs a two-stroke penalty – 13-2/28.
- C The competitor is disqualified.

Answers:

- 1 C He must drop the ball outside the bunker with a one-stroke penalty.
- 2 C The player incurs a two-stroke penalty.
- 3 B The player loses the hole.
- 4 B The competitor incurs a two-stroke penalty.