

Can I play this shot in my underwear?

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

During the first round of the WGC-CA Championship, tour professional Henrik Stenson faced a difficult shot from within a water hazard. Stenson was entitled to play his ball as it lies in the water hazard and Rule 26-2 covers situations that can arise once the ball has been played.



This is not uncommon during play of major golf tournaments. I can recall a number of situations where PGA Tour players slipped into their rain gear on bright sunny days to play shots out of water or mud to save a stroke. We can all appreciate these players not wanting to destroy their clothing or walk around soaking wet for the rest of the round. Covering up makes good sense but what about taking everything off?

When Stenson approached his ball and decided to attempt the shot from within the hazard, he didn't put clothes on; he took them off. All of them.

Although there are examples of players removing some items of clothing, I think it's safe to say that Stenson may be the first player in a PGA Tour event to make a shot wearing nothing but his golf glove and boxer briefs. The question is did he break any rules by doing so?

Under Rule 33-1 the rules committee must establish the conditions under which a competition is to be played. Most commonly these conditions cover specifications on clubs and balls, pace of play, practice and whether the use of motorized transportation will be permitted or not. Committees may also require players to adhere to certain policies once accepted into a tournament. Of-

ten a player code of conduct and dress code are established and distributed to all participants. For example, the code of conduct issued to competitors at the RCGA's Canadian Junior Championship prohibits the consumption of alcohol and tobacco throughout the competition. A player violating this policy is subject to disqualification.

Stipulations regarding a player's attire can also be established by the committee. Shorts, for example, are not permitted to be worn by a player during a PGA Tour event. That begs the question...did Stenson wear shorts? If taken literally, then clearly the answer would be yes. Upon review, however, the committee felt that Stenson's decision to disrobe (though not recommended) was not a violation of the PGA Tour's dress code policy and no penalty was incurred.

Shortly after the round Stenson explained "If you are saving a shot, that has to be worth taking off your shirt and trousers. I'm sure I'll hear a few comments and once the pictures get out, I'll hear a few more. I'll probably take that to my grave with me. I don't think I scared too many spectators off the course...hopefully."

Stenson finished the round with a 69, including one of the most memorable bogies in tour history.

Photo by Kyle Auclair/Getty Images

RULES Quiz

1. A player has a difficult lie behind a tree. He makes a stroke and the ball hits the tree, rebounding back and hitting the player in the leg. What is the ruling?

- A** No penalty and the ball must be played as it lies.
- B** No penalty and the stroke is cancelled and replayed.
- C** The player incurs a one-stroke penalty.
- D** The player incurs a two-stroke penalty.

2. A player sees her tee shot come to rest in a water hazard. She announces that she will play a provisional ball and plays a second ball, which comes to rest in the deep rough. Upon arriving at the water hazard, she finds her original ball in a playable position on a bank inside the hazard. How may the player proceed?

- A** She must abandon the second ball and continue with the original ball without penalty.
- B** She may either play the original ball without penalty or play the second ball under penalty of one stroke.
- C** She must play the second ball, playing her fourth stroke.
- D** She must abandon both balls and return to the tee to put another ball in play.

3. A player marks and lifts his ball on the putting green. After replacing it and removing the marker, he rotates the ball without lifting it to align the logo in the direction of the putt. What is the ruling?

- A** No penalty.
- B** One-stroke penalty for touching his ball in play.
- C** Two-stroke penalty for using an artificial device.
- D** Three penalty strokes.

Answers:

- 3** Decision 18-2a/33
- 2** Decision 27-2a/2
- 1** Rule 19-2

HANDICAP HELP

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The RCGA Network is a national web-based handicap and communication network service for RCGA members and member clubs. Gone are the days of waiting your turn at the computer terminal at the club; at www.rcganetwork.org you can post your scores and much, much more. Here are 10 great reasons to use the RCGA Network.

1 Convenience The RCGA Network is available 24/7 from anywhere in the world. All you need to do is go to www.rcganetwork.org and input your username and password to maintain your Handicap Factor in real time.

2 Time In a rush to leave the club right after your round? No problem. You can sit back later that night on the couch, log in to your RCGA Network account and post your day's score.

3 Accuracy For those of you lucky enough to escape the Canadian winter it used to be difficult to keep your handicap up to date. Often you would need to lug home all your scorecards for input once the Canadian golf season started. The RCGA Network allows you to post scores as you play, wherever you play.

4 Stat tracking The RCGA Network allows you to keep track of the status of your golf game. Greens in regulation, fairways, putts, up and downs, sand saves...your stats are all there to help you improve your game.

5 Verify handicaps Not quite sure of the handicap your upcoming opponent is carrying? Worried you may be getting shortchanged on strokes? The RCGA Network facilitates totally transparent peer review. Just go to www.rcganetwork.org, click the Handicap Verification Search button and review the entire scoring record of any fellow RCGA member on the network.

6 Golf news All the latest golf news is available on the RCGA Network. You can also view a full leaderboard of the week's PGA Tour stop, updated in real time.

7 Education Many of you will remember when handicaps were calculated using pencil and paper. It's much quicker and easier now that computers do the work, but most people have no idea how their Handicap Factor is calculated. The RCGA Network provides a detailed explanation of which scores are being counted and a mathematical breakdown of exactly how your Handicap Factor is calculated.

8 Historical information The RCGA Network archives up to five years of handicap information. You can view the history of your Handicap Factor to gauge the progression of your game.

9 Handicap card Your RCGA membership/handicap card is required for participation in most tournaments. You can now download and print your card directly from the RCGA Network. The card printout even includes a record of your last 20 games.

10 Fun Using the RCGA Network is much more fun than posting scores at your club's computer. Send messages to golf buddies, check out the scoring record of your cousin who lives on the other side of the country, review course profiles and more. It's much more than a score posting site.

If you are interested in using the RCGA Network but don't know your login code, please contact mmackay@rcga.org and we'll get you connected.