

Fact or fiction?

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

We've all heard those "urban legends," stories that have been passed on from generation to generation. Whether because of their believability or their popularity, these myths somehow become reality.

I remember watching the U.S. Open last year with a friend who was adamant that one of the hole locations selected for the final round was "illegal".

He argued that a hole had to be at least four paces from any edge of the green. Sounds fair, right?

Myth #1 - Certain pin placements are illegal.

There is no rule in golf mandating where the hole must be cut on the green. In theory the hole could be cut anywhere. When determining pin placements for a tournament, rules officials generally consider factors such as slope and the speed of the green, as well as the quality of the field. However the Rules of Golf remain silent on this issue.

Myth #2 - You can declare your ball lost.

Statements such as "that's lost" or "I'll never find that one" are made regularly through a round. Although those statements may end up becoming true, they don't carry any weight under the rules.

A ball is deemed lost if; (a) It is not found or identified as his by the player within five minutes after the player's side or his or their caddies have begun to search for it. (b) The player has made a stroke at a provisional ball from the place where the original ball is likely to be or from a point nearer the hole than that place. (c) The player has put another ball into play under penalty of stroke and distance or (d) The player has put another ball into play because it is known or virtually certain that the ball, which has not been found, has been moved by an outside agency or is in an obstruction, an abnormal ground condition or a hazard. So the next time you give up searching for that ball after a minute and make the statement "it's lost" - remember it isn't until one of the above actions happen.

Myth #3 - The player off the green always has the honour. Three players are on the green, while the fourth is off the green but closer



to the hole. That player should "come onto" the green before anyone putts, right?

In fact, whoever is farthest from the hole has the honour regardless of where their ball lies. In practice, of course, everyone frequently plays onto the green, even if they are not the farthest from the hole, to save time. There is no penalty for playing out of turn in stroke play, as long as the player does not do so to give a fellow-competitor an advantage - by showing him the line of a putt for example. While there is no penalty in match play, your opponent can recall your stroke if you play out of turn.

Myth #4 - You may not strike the ball using a croquet style stroke.

In a recent round of golf I played my ball close to a boundary fence and a large tree. With no relief available from the fence and unable to play a proper stroke, I resorted to the unthinkable - a between the legs recovery shot. As I was about to play. My fellow-competitor claimed, "You can't play a shot like that!"

In fact a croquet-style stroke is only prohibited on the putting green. Rule 16-1e prohibits a player from straddling the line of putt. If your ball lies off the green, there is no such prohibition.

Myth #5 - You may not borrow balls or tees from another player.

One of the most common questions the RCGA rules hotline receives is whether a player is entitled to use a discarded tee from a fellow competitor or borrow equipment from another player.

Well our final myth has been busted. There is no rule prohibiting a player from borrowing equipment from another player. Whether a player borrows tees, balls, a towel, umbrella or a distance measuring device, no penalty is applied. However, the same cannot be said of borrowing clubs. Rule 4-4a prohibits a player from adding or borrowing a club selected for play by anyone playing on the course. Partners are permitted to share clubs (Rule 4-4b) provided the total number of clubs carried by the partners does not exceed 14.

So the next time you find yourself playing a difficult between-the-legs shot from off the green to a ridiculously placed hole location, while the rest of the group is on the green but further away, after declaring your ball lost and borrowing your fellow competitor's Bushnell - you'll know what is fact and what is fiction.

RULES Quiz

1. During a match play competition, a hole becomes surrounded by casual water after three matches have already played the hole. With five matches yet to play the hole, what option does the committee have?

- A** The remaining matches must discontinue play until the casual water dries.
- B** The remaining five matches must play the hole as it is.
- C** The committee may discontinue play and move the hole location to a dry section of the green.

2. A player's tee shot comes to rest in a heavily-wooded area. He correctly plays a provisional into the fairway. He decides to not search for his original ball, but as he is walking toward his provisional ball, a forecaddie announces that he has found a ball. Not wanting to play the original ball, the player refuses to identify the found ball and continues play with the provisional ball. What is the ruling?

- A** The player incurs a one-stroke penalty.
- B** The player incurs a two-stroke penalty.
- C** The player is subject to disqualification.

3. In stroke play, a player plays out of turn from the tee. His fellow-competitors bring this to his attention, so he abandons the ball and plays another ball in the correct order. What is the ruling?

- A** The first ball is in play without penalty.
- B** The second ball is in play under penalty of stroke and distance.
- C** The first ball is in play and the player incurs a two-stroke penalty for playing a wrong ball.

4. A player holes a short putt from a stance astride, with either foot touching an extension of his line of putt behind the ball. The act was inadvertent to avoid standing on another player's line of putt or prospective line of putt. What is the ruling?

- A** There is no penalty.
- B** The player incurs a one-stroke penalty.
- C** The player incurs a two-stroke penalty.

Playing the Percentages

BY MATT MACKAY, RCGA MANAGER, MEMBER RELATIONS



How much of your handicap should you be allowed in a competition?

The RCGA's handicap department fields dozens of queries each season regarding the percentage of handicap a player should be allowed to use in a competition. Generally speaking, if a high handicapper asks the question, they want us to declare that 100% of handicap be allowed. If it's a low handicapper, they are hoping that only 70% or 80% of handicap will be allowed.

The answer? It depends on the form of play.

Because handicap allowances have no effect in determining a Handicap Factor, the RCGA does not establish official rules on handicap allowance; however, their use is recommended to produce fair and equitable competition.

FORMS OF PLAY AND RECOMMENDED HANDICAP ALLOWANCES

Singles - Match and Stroke Play: The RCGA recommends that the higher handicapped player receive the full difference in Course Handicap between the two players; the lower handicapped player plays from scratch.

Example; Player A is a 10 handicap. Player B is a 25 handicap. Player B receives 15 strokes from Player A, to be taken on handicap stroke holes 1 through 15.

Four-Ball Match Play: Two competitors play as partners, each playing their own ball. The RCGA recommends the Course Handicap of all four players be reduced by the Course Handicap of the lowest handicap, who then plays from scratch. Each of the other players is allowed 100% of the difference.

Foursome Match Play: Two play against two and each side plays one ball (alternate shot). The RCGA recommends the

allowance for the higher handicapped side be 50% of the difference between the combined Course Handicap of the members of each side, or 40% if selected drives are permitted. The lower handicapped side competes at scratch.

Example: Side A-B with a combined Course Handicap of 15 competes against side C-D with a combined Course Handicap of 36. C-D receives 11 strokes ($36-15 = 21 \times 50\% = 10.5$ rounded to 11).

Chapman or Pinehurst: Two players play as partners, each playing from the teeing ground and each playing the partner's ball for the second shot. After the second shot, partners select the ball with which they wish to score, and play that ball alternately to complete the hole. The RCGA recommends the player with the lower Course Handicap be allowed 60% of the Course Handicap, and the player with the higher Course Handicap be allowed 40% of the Course Handicap. The total is rounded off with .5 rounded upward.

Scramble: Because the scramble format does not follow the principles of the Rules of Golf and is very unpredictable, the RCGA does not provide an official recommendation for handicap allowances. However, the following allowances do seem to work well with most groups, with Player A representing the lowest handicap and Player D representing the highest handicap.

- PLAYER A - receives 20% of Course Handicap
- PLAYER B - receives 15%
- PLAYER C - receives 10%
- PLAYER D - receives 5%

For a complete listing of recommended allowances for various forms of play, refer to Section 9-4 of the RCGA Handicap Manual, available online at rcga.org. If you have handicap questions contact the RCGA at 1-800-263-0009 x209 or email Matt MacKay at mmackay@rcga.org.

Answers:

- 1: C 2: B 3: A 4: B