

The Rules Applied – February '23

For those of you thinking that we just have not talked enough about cart paths, you're in luck! In November, we talked about the right side of Hole 11, but there are a number of other odd circumstances at DeBell where cartpaths come into play.

I'm on the left side of Hole 11, near the green. I know the cart path is out of bounds there, but my ball managed to stay on grass. Because I'm right handed, when I take my stance, I'm standing on the cart path. So I get relief right?

Sorry, no. although you normally get relief when an immovable obstruction interferes with your stance or swing, this does not apply when the obstruction is out of bounds or in a hazard. So at that spot, no relief.

Now, I'm on the left side of Hole 16 because my tee shot is up on the hillside. I know that my ball lies within a red-staked penalty area, so I can take penalty area relief (at a cost of 1 stroke) and drop within 2 club lengths. Right?

Well, sort of. In this case, the red stakes are on the left side of the cart path, so the cart path is not a part of the penalty area. Technically, you should drop within 2 club lengths of the spot where your ball crossed into the hazard. But this will leave you on the cart path. You are then entitled to cart path relief, which would be the nearest point of relief off the cart path, plus one club length. So, you don't get 2 club lengths on the grass; you get nearest point plus 1 club length.

Finally, what if my approach shot on 18 ends up hole high near the fence left of the cart path? I have to stand on the cart path to get a club on the ball, and my club would probably hit the cart path, so I get relief, right?

Here, the answer depends on whether you believe in good faith that you could have hit the ball if not for the cart path. Remember, you do not get relief from the fence because it is a perimeter fence which marks out of bounds. If your ball is so tight against the fence that you cannot get a club on it, you'll have to take a penalty for an unplayable lie. But if in good faith you believe you would have hit the shot but for the cart path (you might have played it sideways, rather than take a penalty), then you get cart path relief. First mark your ball and, depending on where the flag is, walk across the cart path at an angle, maintaining the distance from the flag to determine where the nearest point of stance and swing relief is. If you have a range finder, you can use it to help you make sure you do not get any closer to the hole. You may find that you need ten steps to get to a point of relief if you angle to the right, but only nine steps if you angle to the left. (This may well be different depending on whether you are right or left handed.) Obviously, if you can get to a point of relief no nearer to the hole in a shorter distance to the left, than that is your nearest point of relief (even if you like the angle from the right better).

Any other cart path questions? Let us know.