

## The Rules Applied - November 2022

As a general rule, we love cart paths. Cart paths are immovable obstructions, and therefore you get free relief if they interfere with your stance or swing. And who doesn't love to get something for free. But there are a load of issues that arise with cart paths – so many that we will need more than one rules discussion to address them.

*OK, so this happens all the time. My tee shot on hole 11 leaves my ball in the center of the asphalt spillway/cart path to the right of the fairway (between holes 11 and 12). I know I get free relief, but where?*

First (and always) mark the spot where the ball came to rest. Next, determine the nearest point of full relief. The nearest point of relief is defined as the nearest point on the course which is no nearer the hole and which allows the player complete relief (stance and swing) from the cause for relief. In determining the nearest point of relief, the player excludes penalty areas and bunkers.

Because you must take complete relief for both stance and swing, the nearest point of relief will often be different for left-handed and right-handed players. But for each player, it will always be a clearly defined point – you do not get to choose between different possible points of relief.

In this case, a right-handed player will take relief on the fairway side of the path, as he can stand on the grass, with his ball lying just off the path. If he were to go the opposite side (toward the 12<sup>th</sup> hole), he would have to place the ball farther away, so that he could take a stance with his heels off the path. (In taking your stance, use the club you intend to hit – not your longest club – and stand as if you were ready to hit a ball.) The place where the ball would lie is the nearest point of relief. Unfortunately, using the same process, the nearest point of relief for a left-handed player would be on the slope, on the hole 12 side of the path. The lefty may not want to use cart path relief, and may just want to hit the ball off the path, which he is certainly allowed to do.

As a reminder, once you have determined the nearest point of relief, mark the point and measure 1 club length (this time using your longest club), to determine the drop zone. If the dropped ball exits the drop zone, drop again. If the ball rolls to an area in which the player does not get complete relief (either because the ball or the player's stance is on the path), drop again. If the second drop does not leave the ball in a proper area, then place it on the spot where it landed on the second drop. The drop area is within 1 club length of the nearest point of relief, not within 1 club length of the cart path. So first determine your nearest point of relief, and then measure 1 club length.

*So the left-handed player is screwed?* Well, in this case, yes. But if the ball is in the center of the cart path on 15, the nearest point would be on the fairway side (on grass) for the lefty and the barranca side (probably on dirt) for the righty. So it goes.

3) *Now suppose my tee shot on 16 careens of the mountain and comes to rest in the middle of the cart path.* In this case, both right and left-handed players get to drop on the fairway side of the path, because the mountain side of the path is a penalty area. However, the nearest point of relief would be different. The right-handed player takes a stance, with his heels just off the path, using the club he intends to hit. The point where the clubhead hits the ground – the point where the ball would be placed to take a shot – is the nearest point of relief. (And, of course, the drop may occur within 1 club length of the nearest point of relief.) On the other hand, the nearest point of relief for the left-handed player would be just off the path, and his 1 club length would measure from there.

4) *Suppose my tee shot on 15 stayed up on the mountain. That's a red-tipped penalty area, so I get 2-club lengths from point of entry, right?* Yes, you are correct about that rule, but the application here does not help you. The penalty area is defined by red stakes running along the left edge of the cart path. Determine the point of entry and mark that spot with a tee. Measure 2 club lengths, mark the spot and take a drop. You will almost certainly be dropping your ball on the cart path, and you may then take cart path relief as described above. If the ball rolls across the cart path onto the fairway side, and it is still within 2 club lengths of the point of entry, then it is in play. This would be a tough break for a left-handed player, who would then get no relief. But a righty would still be standing the path when he takes his stance, and therefore would be entitled to cart path relief, as described above.

5) *And if my tee shot on 1 goes left into the penalty area? Same result?* Yes. You may take 2 club lengths from point of entry (a point on the left side of the path), and then cart path relief, if your drop leaves your ball on the cart path, or if the cart path interferes with your stance or swing.

6) *Finally, what if my approach shot on 18 ends up hole high against the fence left of the cart path?* Here, you do not get relief from the fence. 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, which may well differ for right and left handers. First mark your ball and, depending on where the flag is, walk at an angle from the ball maintaining the distance from the flag to determine where the point of stance and swing relief is. Maintaining the distance from the flag may make for different points of relief for right-handed and left-handed players.