

The Rules Applied - January '23

For those of you who played in the January tournament, you probably received most of this information. For the rest, here is some info about what to do when you are affected by water.

After the rain, it is really muddy on the course. Can I clean mud off my ball? Generally, the rules do not allow you to clean your ball, other than when it is on the green (or, of course, between holes). However, in tournament play, the tournament officials may authorize the players to lift, clean and place the ball. If this is not authorized by the course or by tournament officials, it is not permitted regardless of the condition of the course. At BMGC tournaments, when conditions warrant it, we may authorize players to lift, clean and place the ball. When this is authorized, it applies everywhere on the course except penalty areas. Remember to mark your ball before you lift it. Then, we require that the ball must be placed within 6" of its original spot, no closer to the hole. If you play in non-BMGC tournaments, you should check with tournament officials as to their rules.

What if my ball or stance is in temporary (casual) water. I get relief from this, right? To be clear, this refers to actual water and not just mud. And it does not refer to balls in penalty areas. But temporary water is an abnormal course condition, like a cart path. You get free relief, by marking your nearest point of relief and then dropping within one club length (no closer to the hole).

What if there is water in the bunker? If you find your ball or stance in water in a bunker, you get free relief at the nearest point of relief within the bunker which is no nearer the hole. If there is no place in the bunker that provides complete relief, then you can take the maximum possible free relief (you may find a spot which is soggy, as that is better than completely submerged). But if there is no acceptable point of free relief, your only option would be to go straight back, away from the hole and drop outside the bunker, with a penalty of 1-stroke. (Rule 16-1c.) In BMGC tournaments, we have adopted a tournament rule allowing a free drop outside the bunker where there is no place to drop in the bunker. But that is our own local rule, not a general rule of golf.

Lastly, what if there is water on the green? If you find your ball or stance in water on the green, you get free relief at your nearest point of relief no closer to the hole (on or off the green). In addition, if you are on the green and there is casual water in your line (your intended path to the hole), you may take relief from this as well, at the nearest point which is no closer to the hole and which gives you an unobstructed line to the hole. Note that this line of sight rule only applies when your ball is on the green.