

The Rules Applied – June ‘23

You start your round with a bag full of clubs, balls, tees, maybe a range finder, and various other items. But what if you need more of something during the round? This month we'll be talking about adding things during the round.

To start with, you are limited to 14 clubs in your bag. (Rule 4.1b.) If you have a 15th club, you may declare to the other players that the club is out of play or otherwise clearly indicate that it will not be used during the round. But this must be done before the round begins. If you do not clearly take the club out of play before you tee off, you are assessed a penalty – 2 strokes per hole, with a maximum of 4 strokes per round. (Rule 4.1b(4).)

You may not replace a club during a round simply because you're not hitting it well, or even because you lost it. However, as we pointed out in our rules discussion in March, if a club is damaged during the round (and not because you got mad and threw it), then it may be replaced, provided you do not unreasonably delay play of the round. (Rule 4.1a(2).)

And if you started with fewer than 14 clubs, you may add clubs up to the 14-limit. But no borrowing clubs from other players, and no altering clubs during a tournament round. (Rule 4.1b(2) and 4.1a(3).)

As for golf balls, there is (fortunately) no limit on the number of golf balls you may carry. And despite what you may have heard about a 1-ball rule (if you start with Titlist pro-v1, then you must play Titlist pro-v1 on every shot during the round), this rule is NOT in effect in our tournaments (it's an optional rule, which is usually in effect only in very high-level tournaments).

If you run out of golf balls, you may get additional balls from anyone, including another player! (Rule 4.2a(1).)

And if you lose your range finder or the battery goes dead? No worries here. Although there is a general rule prohibiting players from asking for advice or giving advice (rule 10.2a), this does not prohibit a player from asking for, or giving, publicly available information. The definition of "advice" specifically excludes information as to distance, position of the hole on the green, wind direction and the rules. Thus, if your own measuring device fails, you may ask another player for the distance.