

The Rules Applied – March '23

Seems like there's always something new that we have to deal with. For golfers, it's the 2023 revisions to the rules of golf. OK, these probably will not change the way you look at the world, but there were a few changes which could make your golf life a little easier.

Replacing a damaged club. *So I must have more power than I thought, because my driver shaft snapped on my tee shot on 8. I have an extra driver in my car. Can I replace the club?*

Under new Rule 4.1a, the answer is now yes. In fact, you may replace a damaged club with any other club. However, there are some conditions – first, the club must have been damaged during the round; second, you must not unreasonably delay play (so wait until you make the turn before going to your car); and third, the club must not have been damaged by abuse. So if your shaft broke as a result of you slamming it into the ground after an errant tee shot, then you're out of luck.

Ball moved by natural forces. *Even with a new driver, I still sliced my tee shot into the barranca on the 10th hole. I know this is a red-tipped penalty area, and so I took a proper drop. The ball lay still for awhile, but then a gust of wind blew it back into the barranca! Now what?*

When you take relief from a penalty area, your ball must come to rest in a relief area. If it rolls back into the penalty area, it is outside the relief area, and therefore you must redrop. However, in your case the ball did come to rest in a proper area and later rolled into the hazard. Ordinarily, you must play your ball as it lies – if your ball moves as a result of natural forces, there is no penalty, but you play from the new spot. (Rule 9.3). But this does not apply to a ball on the putting green that has been marked and then replaced, and, under the new Rule 9.3, it does not apply where a ball is put into play by dropping, placing or replacing it. For both the ball on the green which was marked and replaced, and the ball in the relief area which was dropped, the ball must be replaced in its original position before the wind blew it, and there is no penalty.

Back of the line relief. *On the 3rd hole, I hit into the barranca and want to take back of the line relief. Any special rules here?*

This one is pretty straightforward. Your relief is on the line going straight back from the hole to the point at which your ball entered the hazard. After being dropped, the ball must stay within 1 club length of the point at which you dropped. Because your relief area is behind the point of entry into the hazard, it does not matter if your ball rolls forward, as long as it stays within 1 club length of the point at which you dropped.