

The Rules Applied – June 2022

Fences. Sometimes, you can't get a break. And sometimes, you can.

I'm off to a rough start – on the first hole, I hit my second shot up against the fence on the right side; on the second hole, I hit my tee shot up against the fence on the right side. Other than aiming a little farther to the left, what do I do?

The rules governing these two situations are quite different. DeBell has 2 types of fences, perimeter fences and interior protective fences. Perimeter fences define the boundaries of the course and are treated as out of bounds markers. A ball coming to rest on or near the fence is in play, there is no free relief from any perimeter fence. If you can't play the shot you may take unplayable ball relief, which we discussed last month (2 club lengths no closer to the hole, or replay the prior shot (stroke and distance), either of which would entail a 1-stroke penalty). Because your shot on 1 lies next to a perimeter fence, you must either play it as it lies or treat it as unplayable.

On the other hand, interior protective fences are immovable obstructions and therefore you are allowed free relief, if the obstruction interferes with your stance or swing (mark the nearest point of relief and drop within 1 club length). Keep in mind that you get relief on 2 only if the fence interferes with your swing or stance. You do not get relief if you are not obstructed, even if the ball is only an inch from the fence.

And just a reminder – relief is allowed only for obstructed stance or swing, not simply because your line of sight is obstructed. If you hit your tee shot on 7 behind the protective fence, you do not get relief simply because the fence stands between you and the green.

Just my luck – my second shot on 3 goes over the green, and once again, I'm up against a fence. This is a perimeter fence, so I take a 1-stroke penalty and drop within 2 club lengths right?

Well, you can do that. But keep in mind that your drop must be no closer to the hole (so you will probably be moving sideways), and that you must play the ball as it lies after the drop (provided it has not rolled outside of the 2-club length area). If you drop the ball and it rolls back to the fence, you must either play it from that bad lie or take a second unplayable lie with a second penalty. You'll have to decide whether it makes more sense to go back to the site of your previous shot and re-hit.