

The Rules Applied - December 2022

Rules are rules, however different formats have different rules. With team play approaching we should discuss some differences in rules for match play versus stroke play.

Concessions. Stroke play requires all holes be completed by holing out. However in match play, holes can be completed by a concession. A concession is made only when it is clearly communicated, either verbally or by an action that clearly shows the player's intent to concede the stroke or the hole. If a player lifts his ball because of a reasonable misunderstanding that the stroke or hole was conceded, there is no penalty, and the ball must be replaced on its original spot. A concession is final – once it is made, it cannot be withdrawn, and it cannot be declined (rule 3.2b(2).) Thus, if your putt has been conceded, you may not putt it, even if you would like to show your partner the line.

Practice. In stroke play a player is not allowed to practice on the course (except for designated practice areas) before a round. Violation of this is the general penalty (2 strokes) which would be applied to the player's score on the first hole (rule 5.2b). But in match play, a player may practice on the course before a round without any penalty (rule 5.2a). As a reminder, in both stroke play and match play, you may putt or chip for practice after the hole is determined (both individual and partner), as long as this does not unreasonably delay play.

Teeing outside the tee box. In stroke play, a player who plays his tee shot from outside the teeing area, is assessed the general penalty (2 strokes) and must correct the mistake by re-hitting from inside the teeing area; the ball played from outside the teeing area is not in play (rule 6.1b/2). But in match play there is no penalty; instead, the opponent may (at his option) cancel the stroke. This must be done promptly and before either player makes another stroke. If a stroke is cancelled the player must re-hit from the teeing area (with no penalty) and it is still his turn to play. But if the opponent does not cancel the stroke, the stroke counts and the ball is in play (rule 6.1b/1). One unusual situation is this: suppose a player hits from outside the tee box and hits out of bounds; his opponent, of course, does not cancel the shot. In this case, the player must take the stroke and a penalty and then re-hit from the point of his last shot. But since the last shot was not within the teeing area (and was not cancelled), the second ball must be hit from the same spot (outside the teeing area) and may not be re-teeed.

Order of play. In stroke play, it is simply a matter of courtesy that the player farthest from the hole plays first. But in match play, the rule requires that ball farthest from the hole must play first. There is no penalty for hitting out of order, but the opponent may cancel a shot which is hit out of order and require that the ball be re-hit, from the original spot, in the correct order. However, where there is a partner match, it is the partnership with the ball farthest from the hole that must go first. The partners may decide to let the closer ball go first (perhaps to give a line on the putting green), even if the player going first is closer to the hole than the opponents. Again, this only applies where one of the partners is farthest from the hole.

Playing two balls. In stroke play, where a player is uncertain as to the rules, he may play two balls and obtain a ruling after the match. But in match play, this option is not available. If there is a dispute as to the correct ruling, the players should try to come to an agreement and their

agreement will be binding (even if incorrect). (Rule 20.1b(1).) However, the players may not deliberately agree to a breach of rules. (Rule 3.2d.) If the parties cannot reach an agreement, a player may take whatever action he believes is correct; BUT the opponent may then notify the player that he intends to seek a ruling. This notice must be given by the opponent before the player begins the next hole (that is, the next hole after he learns the relevant facts). (Rule 20.1b(2).) The ruling must be obtained before the result is recorded or reported. (Rule 3.2a(5).) If the player's action was incorrect, and the ruling goes against him, he loses the hole.

Penalty/Loss of hole. In many situations, violation of the rules will result in a general penalty of 2 strokes in stroke play. However, the general penalty in match play is loss of hole. This applies, for example, where a player plays his ball from the wrong place (e.g., after causing the ball to move and not replacing it when required to do so) (9.2, 9.3), or where a player improperly cleans his ball or improves his lie (9.4, 8.1a), or if a player plays the wrong ball (6.3c).