

New Local Rule Eliminates Penalty for a Player Who Accidentally Causes a Ball to Move on the Putting Green

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Far Hills, N.J.: The USGA and The R&A today announced the introduction of a new Local Rule that eliminates the penalty when a ball is accidentally moved on the putting green.

The Local Rule will be available for any committee in charge of a competition to use starting Jan. 1, 2017. It will be adopted by the USGA and The R&A in all of their championships, qualifying competitions and international matches.

“Eliminating this penalty responds to the concerns we have heard from both golfers and committees about the difficulties in applying the current Rules when a player accidentally causes a ball to move on the putting green,” said Thomas Pagel, USGA senior director, Rules of Golf and Amateur Status, said. “This change is a good example of the type of Rules Modernization changes we hope to implement after completing our fundamental review of all of the Rules. We are looking for ways to improve the Rules by making them easier to understand and apply.”

David Rickman, executive director - Governance at The R&A, said, “For the past several years, as part of The R&A and USGA’s Rules Modernization initiative, we have considered the penalty for a ball that is accidentally moved on the putting green. Both Rules Committees agreed that it needed to be changed and decided that in this particular case it was important to act now, through a Local Rule, rather than wait for the next overall set of revisions to the Rules of Golf.”

The Local Rule has been welcomed by all of the major tours worldwide, and the PGA Tour, European Tour, LPGA, PGA of America and the Masters Tournament are among the golf organizations that will implement the Local Rule for all future events, beginning Jan.1, 2017.

If a committee wishes to introduce this Local Rule, the following wording is recommended:

“Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1 are modified as follows:

When a player’s ball lies on the putting green, there is no penalty if the ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved by the player, his partner, his opponent, or any of their caddies or equipment.

The moved ball or ball-marker must be replaced as provided in Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1.

This Local Rule applies only when the player’s ball or ball-marker lies on the putting green and any movement is accidental.

Note: If it is determined that a player’s ball on the putting green was moved as a result of wind, water or some other natural cause such as the effects of gravity, the ball must be played as it lies from its new location. A ball-marker moved in such circumstances is replaced.”

For more information about the new Local Rule, including explanatory diagrams, videos and a detailed question-and-answer document, please visit www.usga.org/2017localrule.



About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches, attracting players and fans from more than 160 countries. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, equipment standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's reach is global with a working jurisdiction in the United States, its territories and Mexico, serving more than 25 million golfers and actively engaging 150 golf associations.

The USGA is one of the world's foremost authorities on research, development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. It serves as a primary steward for the game's history and invests in the development of the game through the delivery of its services and its ongoing "For the Good of the Game" grants program. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries.

For more information about the USGA, visit www.usga.org.

About The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A runs The Open, elite amateur events, international matches and rankings. Together The R&A and the USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, operating in separate jurisdictions but sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status and Equipment Standards. The R&A, through R&A Rules Ltd, governs the sport worldwide, outside of the United States and Mexico, on behalf of over 30 million golfers in 140 countries and with the consent of 152 organisations from amateur and professional golf.

The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the sport internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities.

For more information about The R&A, visit www.randa.org.

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