

A WATCH LIST OF NUANCES

Besides the specific wording in the Rules, there are some underlying nuances of the Rules that have the potential to cause great difficulties for a student of the Rules. Thus, one may think they have an understanding of some concept in the Rules and then discover that one has overlooked an essential part of a Rule because its relationship to another part was obscure. The watch list of nuances:

- **Match Play Rules Issues.**

Agreement among the players and ruling requests to a referee or the Committee are the two avenues for deciding whether a player's action is consistent with the requirements of the Rules.

Most match play goes on without a referee being assigned to the match. Therefore, most often players simply agree how to decide a Rules issue on their own. This agreement is conclusive even if it turns out to have been wrong under the Rules, so long as the players did not deliberately agree to waive the Rules.

When a referee is assigned to accompany the players throughout a match, the referee will decide questions of fact and rule on anything that the referee observes or is reported from the players by a request in time. It is this latter item that is governed by the specific language of the Rules.

A player may get a ruling from a referee only if a player both tells the opponent about the ruling request and makes the request in time. Rule 20.1b spells out the time limits, which if not met no ruling will be given and the result of the hole(s) in question will stand even if the Rules were applied in the wrong way. Thus, even though a breach of the Rules has taken place, there will be no penalty applied to any player if the request for a ruling is not made in time.

- **Deliberate action Rules vs. accidental action Rules.**

There are numerous instances of these two types of Rules and generally a deliberate action in violation of a Rule results in a penalty but an accidental action sometimes does not.

According to Rule 7.4, there is no penalty if the player's ball at rest and in play is accidentally moved by the player, opponent or anyone else while trying to find or identify it. After search and identification is complete, if the player should

accidentally cause the ball to move, say by a practice swing, then there would be a penalty under Rule 9.4. On the other hand, if the player accidentally touches the ball, there is no penalty but if the ball is deliberately touched there is a penalty. The differences in these separate situations are subtle and must be pinpointed to reach a proper conclusion.

Some Rules administer a single subject like a ball in motion after a stroke hitting a person. Rule 11.1 covers the accidental part of the subject and Rule 11.2, the deliberate part. From Rule 11.1, if a player is accidentally hit by the ball in motion, there is no penalty to anyone. From Rule 11.2, if the ball is deliberately deflected or stopped by the player, then the player gets the general penalty.

- **Being unaware may result in no penalty to the player.** If a player in stroke play fails to include a penalty stroke in his or her score for a hole that the player was unaware of before returning the scorecard, the player is not disqualified. If the player knew about the penalty at the time, the penalty is disqualification.
- **Interrelationships.** Many Rules have internal or external interrelationships that are essential to the meaning of the item at hand. These nuances must be recognized, respected and understood.

Within the Rules, formally stated Exceptions may appear in various places in the Rules text but many times there are words in a sentence, such as “unless,” or “but,” that change the meaning of the preceding or succeeding words and serve the same purpose as a formal exception.

- **Difference between “play a ball” and “put a ball into play.”** The phrase, “playing a ball,” when cited in the Rules means making a stroke at a ball. If this is the first stroke from the teeing area, then this action puts the ball into play. However, if after that first stroke a ball is lifted, prior to properly playing the ball, the ball must be put into play by placing or dropping [Rule 14].

Understanding this difference is essential to evaluating a given situation. For example, if a player (i) substitutes a ball when not permitted [Rule 6.3], (ii) does not drop a ball in the right way [Rule 14.3b] or (iii) drops a ball in a wrong place [Rule 14.7], there is no penalty until the player plays the ball. Thus, when correcting these mistakes according to the requirements of Rule 14.5 when it says “but this is allowed only before the ball has been played,” this means that a stroke has not been made at the ball.