

Relief When a Player's Ball Lies in a Divot Hole in a Fairway?

While hitting a ball into a divot hole in the fairway doesn't seem like a fair result and is certainly bad luck, hitting a ball in the rough and winding up with a good lie doesn't seem like what is supposed to happen either. In the simple yet deceptively complicated game of golf, there is nothing more fundamental than playing the ball as it lies. In golf, and in life for that matter too, sometimes you do everything right and get a terrible result while at other times you do everything wrong and get a great result. Overcoming the bad breaks and taking advantage of the good ones is at the core of the challenges presented by the game of golf.

Golfers don't propose that the rules be changed to get rid of good lies in the rough. It would be a different game if we were allowed both to take our ball out of a divot hole in the fairway and had to push our ball down in the rough to make sure we had bad lies. Furthermore, the good lies in the rough far outnumber the number of balls in divot holes in the fairway.

Richard Tufts, in his 1960 book [The Principles Behind the Rules of Golf](#) wrote the following on this subject:

“Golf would cease to be a game of skill if the player were permitted to get the best of the conditions which confront him through their elimination rather than to overcome them by the expert execution of his stroke. Golf, like life, is full of breaks. It is a game of chance, one of its fascinations being in “the way the ball bounces.” To be able to accept the breaks and still go on playing your game has always been one of the tests of the true champion, a test which it is more important to meet successfully in golf than in any other sport. The acceptance of the conditions which the player finds on the course is, therefore, a vital part of the game.”

If you were watching the final round of the US Open this year (2019), you may have seen the winner Gary Woodland twice drive his ball into divot holes in fairways. On the short par four 4th hole he played a terrific shot from a divot hole to within a few feet of the hole and made the birdie putt. Later in the round on one of the difficult long par four holes, he played his ball onto the green from a divot hole and two putted for par. He accepted those breaks, played his game and demonstrated the character of the champion he is.