



Rule of the Month, Four-Ball Stroke Play

February 1, 2015

The USGA has created two new national championships that will both be played for the first time this spring. The U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship will be played May 2-6 at the Olympic Club (Lake Course) and the U.S. Women's Amateur Four-Ball Championship will be conducted at the Bandon Dunes Golf Resort (Pacific Dunes Course) May 9-13.

Since the topic of Four-Ball play will be in the news a lot, we thought it might be a good time to offer a quick quiz on Four-Ball Stroke Play. While the new championships will consist of two days of qualifying stroke play, followed by match play, we are only going to cover stroke play here because that is a format more commonly used at club events, such as Member Guests. Rule 31 covers Four-Ball Stroke Play and the format is defined as one where two competitors play as partners, each playing his or her own ball. The lower score of the partners is the score for the hole.

For the purpose of this TRUE/FALSE quiz, Players A and B are to be considered partners and Players C and D are partners and fellow-competitors of A and B.

1. During the play of the second hole, Player B realizes he has 15 clubs in his bag. Player B must add two strokes to his score for each of the first two holes, but Player A incurs no penalty.
2. On the fourth hole, Player A is in a deep greenside bunker and is not aware that Player B is attending the flagstick. Player A makes his stroke and the ball strikes the flagstick. Player A is not penalized because he was not aware Player B was attending the flagstick.
3. On the sixth hole, Player B plays a wrong ball, which turns out to be Player A's ball. Both Players are penalized two strokes.
4. Player A, growing more irritated with his partner, fails to pay attention on the seventh hole and plays his tee shot from outside the teeing ground. Player A does not correct his error, but Player B plays the hole properly and A and B tee off on the eighth hole. Still, the side is disqualified because Player A did not correct his error.
5. At the turn, Player B is bothered by an upset stomach. He tells Player A to go and begin the back nine without him and that he will rejoin him later. Player A plays the 10th hole. Side A/B should be disqualified because both partners did not play the hole.
6. Player B rejoins Player A on the 11th hole, a par three. Both Players' balls end up in the same bunker. Player B removes a loose impediment from the bunker while both balls lie in the bunker. Both Player A and B are penalized two strokes for B's action.
7. On the 13th green, Player A asks Player B which way he thinks Player A's putt will break. Player B gives Player A an answer. Both players are penalized for asking for/giving advice.
8. Shortly after giving the answer, Player B emphasizes how he thinks the putt will break by touching the green with his putter head to show Player A where to hit the ball. Since Player A did not touch the green himself, he is exempt from penalty.
9. On the 15th green, Player A lies farthest from the hole, and Player B lies closest to the hole, with the balls belonging to Players C and D in the middle. Player B chooses to play first, followed by Player A. Player B should be penalized for playing out of order.
10. After Players A and B have left the scoring area, the scoring official notices that only the marker for Side A/B and Player A signed the score card. Players A and B are disqualified because the score card did not have both players' signatures.

Senior OGA Rules Officials: Pete Scholz and Terry McEvilly