



Rule of the Month

October 1, 2017

The Exception to the Rule

Rule 13-2 Exceptions.

Last month we tackled one of the most difficult Rules for a player or official to apply on the course. Rule 13-2, which prohibits improving the lie, area of intended stance or swing, line of play or the area in which a ball may be dropped, is very complex and is subject to interpretations. While one player or official may perceive that an action has created a potential advantage, another may not. Adding to the complexity of the Rule is a long list of exceptions. The exceptions may allow a player to improve an area protected by the Rule under a certain set of circumstances. This month we present ten questions that deal with those exceptions and how to interpret the Rule to minimize the confusion.

Questions: True/False

1. A player takes his backswing for a stroke and in the process breaks branch. He completes his swing hitting the ball onto the putting green. By breaking the branch he has incurred a penalty for improving the area of his swing.
2. A player, whose ball lies under a bush, intends to hit towards the putting green. He takes a practice swing near his ball and breaks a large branch improving his area of intended swing. He decides not to play toward the putting green and his new direction of play has not been improved by the breaking of the branch. There is no penalty as the final line of play chosen has not been improved.
3. Dew may be removed with a towel from around a player's ball on the teeing ground.
4. The line of play may be improved by repairing damage to the putting green caused by the impact of a golf ball but only when the player's ball lies on the putting green.
5. A player may improve his lie by eliminating irregularities of surface within the teeing ground whether or not his ball is in play.
6. An out of bounds stake must not be moved by the player's body when he takes his stance if doing so results in the area of intended stance being improved.
7. In a sandy area through the green (i.e., not in a water hazard or bunker), a player's ball has come to rest in a footprint. He grounds his club lightly behind the ball which results in the sand being slightly compressed. The lie of his ball has been improved and a penalty incurred.
8. A player's ball lies on the fringe of a putting green with sand deposited from bunker shots between his ball and the hole. He may remove the sand that lies on the putting green but not on the fringe.
9. A player backs into a tree when taking his stance improving the area of his intended swing. There is no penalty provided he took his stance in the least intrusive manner and no branches were purposely moved to avoid interference.
10. Divots in a dropping zone may be repaired prior to dropping a ball.