



CANTERBURY REFEREES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 5

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Hi again everybody. Hopefully your golf is looking good with the winter months well and truly behind us and with more run on the fairways. Here are some items of interest for you to consider. Interclub has reached the finals stage and this will be played over the next month. Good luck to all concerned. Referees at Interclub this year have been very busy and although it is match play, they have still been called on to help players out when they are unsure of what to do. Remember, referees are there to give guidance and help when needed, and do not always want to penalise players when they make mistakes. We would rather stop them before making mistakes.

1. **Embedded ball.** An embedded ball must be in its own pitch mark. If it is embedded in such a way that you cannot be sure if it is your ball or not, then you are able to identify it to be certain before you take relief. This is also the case if you are not sure it is embedded or not. Remember hitting a wrong ball is a two shot penalty or loss of hole in match play. Recently a player called me over because his ball was deeply embedded in a penalty area. He wanted to know if he could identify it as his ball before he attempted to hit it out of the penalty area. I told him to mark the spot and lift it, but not clean it. He did so and identified it as his ball. I told him to replace it where it was, as there was no free relief for an embedded ball in a penalty area. He did so and then hit it out of the penalty area onto the fairway. In a penalty area, only the penalty rules apply (R 17). He could have picked it up and taken penalty relief (1 stroke) but he wanted to play it as it laid.
2. **Unplayable bunkers:** Recently in Interclub play, a golf course decided that it's bunkers were in a bad state after heavy rain. Also rains left two full of water. In such a state, the club decided that as two were unplayable, they were declared GUR and there was a drop zone provided for them. For the remainder, it was decided to allow 1 club length placing in the bunker as the sand in them had become compacted. This is an example of a club trying to do the best thing and be fair to players. Declaring all bunkers GUR would have been an alternative option for the players.
3. **What is a Stroke:** This is defined as the forward movement of the club made with the intention to strike the ball. However, a stroke has not been made if the player:
 - a) Decides during the downswing, not to strike the ball, and avoids doing so by deliberately stopping the club head before it reaches the ball, or by deliberately missing the ball
 - b) Accidentally strikes the ball when making a practice swing or while preparing to make a stroke.However, a penalty will apply if this occurs when the ball is in play, when off the green

Here are some applications of the rule, in determining when it is a counting stroke. If the downswing is commenced with the intention of striking the ball it still counts as a stroke when:

- 1) The club head is deflected or stopped by an outside influence (e.g. a tree branch)
- 2) The club head separates from the shaft during the swing, and the player continues with the shaft alone, whether or not the ball is struck with the shaft, or the separated club head

The stroke does not count when:

- During the downswing, the club head separates from the shaft, and the player stops the downswing short of the ball but the club head carries on and moves the ball
- During the backswing, the club head separates from the shaft, and the player completes the downswing, but the ball is not struck by the shaft

4. **Abnormal course condition relief:** The default rule is that you are only entitled to relief from an abnormal course condition, that is in the general area, and the relief must be taken in the general area. Two exceptions are (1) relief is permitted for a ball in a bunker, but the relief must be taken in the bunker as well, (2) relief is permitted on the putting green, but the relief must be taken at the nearest point of complete relief. This may be either on or off the green itself

Happy golfing everyone
Kevin Gwatkin
Canterbury Golf Referees Association