

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

12. Expected Standards of Player Conduct

Current Rule: The Rules address player conduct in only a limited and muted way:

- They set out no standards of conduct, except indirectly when giving the Committee discretion to disqualify players for a “serious breach of etiquette” (Rule 33-7).
- The Rules do not explain what “breach of etiquette” means, leaving that to Decision 33-7/8 and a few other Decisions.
- Although a separate Etiquette Section is published in the same book along with the Rules, it is not made part of the Rules (other than through a few Decisions).

2019 Rule: Rule 1.2a will consolidate the expected standards of player conduct:

- It will declare that players are expected to play in the spirit of the game by acting with integrity, showing consideration to others and taking good care of the course.
- It will unequivocally state the Committee’s authority to disqualify a player for any serious misconduct that is contrary to the spirit of the game.
- In place of the unclear concept of “breach of etiquette”, it will use the more direct and stronger phrases “misconduct” and “serious misconduct.”

Rule 1.2b will also give the Committee authority to adopt its own Code of Conduct and to set penalties for its breach (see Explanation for Proposed Rule Change – *Code of Player Conduct*).

Reasons for Change:

- Golf is a sport in which high standards of conduct are expected from players, and the Rules should declare this in a clear and direct way.
- Although the current Rule book has a separate Etiquette Section that covers the most important aspects of the spirit of the game:
 - The priorities and emphasis of the section are unclear, as it also includes more general recommendations on a variety of topics, and
 - The section does not have the force of Rules or naturally form part of a Committee’s powers.
- Using Rule 1.2a to explain playing in the spirit of the game will help in:
 - Giving more prominence to the expectation that all players will act with integrity, show consideration to others and take good care of the course, and
 - Setting expectations so that players are on notice that serious misconduct in failing to meet those expectations could lead to disqualification.
- Changing the term from “serious breach of etiquette” to “serious misconduct” will help to distinguish this concept from the term “serious breach” which will continue to be used in the new Rules for an entirely different purpose.

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

7. Code of Player Conduct

Current Rule: A Committee may penalize a player for improper conduct (such as dishonesty, offensive remarks, damaging equipment or the course, etc.) only in one way:

- If the player is guilty of a “serious breach of etiquette”, the Committee may disqualify the player from the competition under Rule 33-7.
- But unless some other specific Rule is breached, the Committee has no authority to impose any lesser penalty for a player’s misconduct.

2019 Rule: Under Rule 1.2b, a Committee will be allowed to adopt a “Code of Conduct” that:

- Sets the Committee’s own standards for how players should conduct themselves, and
- May set penalties less than disqualification (such as a one-stroke penalty or a two-stroke penalty/loss of hole penalty) for a player’s breach of those standards.

The Committee will also still be able to disqualify a player for serious misconduct that is contrary to the spirit of the game, as emphasized in new Rule 1.2a (see Explanation for Proposed Rule Change – *Expected Standards of Player Conduct*).

Reasons for Change:

- Some Committees have requested additional means under the Rules to allow them to address player conduct that is contrary to expected standards that are central to the game (such as courtesy and sportsmanship).
 - In many cases, disqualifying a player for inappropriate behavior will be overly harsh - leaving Committees today with no way to penalize players for such behavior.
 - Some Committees deal with this through disciplinary sanctions outside the Rules (such as warnings, fines, restriction of playing privileges, etc.), but such methods are not always effective, appropriate or practical.
 - Also, as the game’s global reach has continued to expand to include golfers from many more cultures and backgrounds, there is a growing desire to let Committees set and enforce standards that fit their particular needs and local norms of proper behavior.
 - This has been a particular concern for junior golf organizations whose mission often includes teaching young golfers how to act while on the course.
- The proposed Rule change will give Committees flexibility to set and enforce standards of conduct specific to their competitions and players, should they choose to do so.

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

10. Elimination of the Requirement to Announce the Player's Intent to Lift a Ball

Current Rule: A special procedure applies when a player intends to mark and lift a ball in three specific situations under the Rules:

- Before lifting the ball, the player must announce the intention to do so to the opponent in match play or another player or the marker in stroke play, and then allow that person to observe the process of lifting and replacing the ball.
- This procedure applies when a ball will be lifted (1) for identification (Rule 12-2), (2) to see if it has become unfit for play (Rule 5-3), or (3) to see if it lies in a condition from which relief is allowed, such as when the ball might be embedded (Decision 20-1/0.7).

2019 Rule: In all three situations under the Rules (that is, Rule 4.2c, Rule 7.3 and Rule 16.4):

- A player will be allowed to mark and lift the ball and proceed under the Rule without needing first to announce this intention to another person or to give that person a chance to observe the process.
- But the player will still get a one-stroke penalty if he or she marked and lifted the ball without good reason to do so under that Rule.

Reasons for Change:

- The Rules generally rely on the integrity of the player.
 - In other relief situations, including when a ball may be lifted and played from a different place, players are allowed to proceed under the Rules without being required to involve another person in any part of the process.
 - For example, a player may determine that a cart path interferes with the lie of his or her ball or the area of intended stance or swing, find the nearest point of relief, lift the ball and drop it in the specified area, determine that the ball has come to rest in the right place, and play the ball – all without having to announce his or her intentions to another person or to allow that other person to observe the process to make sure the player acts correctly.
- Eliminating the announcement requirements for these three situations will simplify the Rules, bring consistency to the approach of trusting the player and eliminate an unnecessary procedural penalty for simply not informing an appropriate person.
- These procedural requirements often have no practical effect as many players to whom such an announcement is made decline to observe the lifting and replacement process and thus are content to rely on the player's integrity.
- This change should also speed up play because a player will no longer need to take the time to inform another player of the intent to lift and to wait to see if that other player wants to come over to observe the lifting and replacement of the ball.
- The requirement for the player to have a good reason to lift under the Rule is a sufficient safeguard against inappropriate lifting or abuse of the Rule.

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

18. Reasonable Judgment in Estimating and Measuring

Current Rule: Before April of 2017, when estimating or measuring under a Rule:

- The player's judgment in doing so was normally given no particular weight or regard; if the player ended up playing from a wrong place based on a wrong estimate or measurement, even if only by a small amount, the player would have been penalized.
- An exception was when a player used his or her best judgment to estimate where a ball entered a water hazard, played the ball and then learned that the judgment was wrong; in that case, there was no penalty if it was an honest judgment (Decision 26-1/17).

In April 2017, a new decision was introduced (Decision 34-3/10) so that when the player estimates or measures a spot, point, line, area or other location, his or her reasonable judgment is accepted:

- If the player did all that could be reasonably expected under the circumstances to make a prompt and accurate estimation or measurement.
- This means that the player's reasonable judgment is upheld even if later shown to be wrong by other information (such as video technology).

2019 Rule: Decision 34-3/10 will be incorporated into the Rules as Rule 1.3b(2).

Reasons for Change:

- The Rules generally rely on the integrity of the player, and this is a natural and appropriate extension of this trust in the player.
- There are many times when the Rules require a player to estimate or measure a spot, point, line, area or other location, such as when the player:
 - Uses a ball-marker to mark a ball's spot, and then replace the ball, or
 - Estimates the spot where the previous stroke was made when playing again under penalty of stroke and distance or when a stroke has been cancelled, or
 - Needs to find a reference point or line for taking relief (such as the nearest point of complete relief or the line when taking unplayable ball relief), or to determine the extent of a relief area (such as measuring a fixed distance from a reference point).
 - Estimates the location of his or her knee when dropping a ball.
- Such judgments need to be made promptly, and players often cannot be precise in doing so.
- So long as the player did all that could be reasonably expected under the circumstances:
 - The player gets no penalty for small inaccuracies, even if an advantage is gained.
 - There is no penalty in certain situations where the player's estimation was significantly wrong but there was effectively no way to have done a better job (as may happen when estimating where a ball entered a water hazard or where a ball was at rest before being moved by an outside influence).
- Accepting a player's reasonable judgment limits the detailed analysis that can arise from the use of enhanced technology (such as video review when golf is televised).